

THE
MEANING
AND
MYSTERY
OF THE
RESURRECTION

The Meaning

and Mystery

of the

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Thomas S. Kepler

RESUR- REC- TION

The Meaning and Mystery of the Resurrection

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FOREWORD

"IF CHRIST has not been raised," says Paul, "then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain." Without Jesus' resurrection there would have been no early Church, no New Testament, no religion called Christianity. Hence its meaning for the Christian religion is central; without its reality the other events and thoughts related to Jesus Christ would have little worth to us today, for they would have been unknown beyond the generation in which Jesus lived. The resurrection of Jesus lends hallowed meaning to all that Jesus said and did among his fellow men, and thus saved his life and teachings for the Christian centuries which followed. Because of the resurrection, theology became Christology, with the gospel of Jesus Christ within the Church becoming the answer to the hopes for God's kingdom coming into history.

This volume plays the role of showing to modern man in his "existentialist" mood how the resurrection of Jesus meaningfully spoke in the early Church

to the "existentialist" hopes of its first members. It describes how the resurrection was interwoven with all the important thoughts as related to Jesus Christ, thus giving a "halo" to all that Jesus said and did. While the New Testament writings unfold the *meaning* of Jesus' resurrection, they keep the reader in the suspension of *mystery* as to just *how* the resurrection of Jesus occurred. Yet when the *meaning* and the *mystery* of Jesus' resurrection are woven together we behold the power and the glory of Jesus' resurrection and understand more fully what Paul meant: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself."

T.S.K.

ONE

MODERN MAN

PONDERS THE MYSTERY

OF LIFE HERE

AND HEREAFTER

AFTER a Sunday evening sermon in Lent several years ago in an Ohio city an elderly man waited to speak to me at the church door. In my sermon that evening I had referred to Voltaire's words in his early life: "I hate to live, yet I am afraid to die," followed by his changed thought years later shortly before his own death, "I am now ready to die, adoring God, loving my fellow men, not hating my enemies, but detesting superstition." Said the man to me, "You hit at my worst fear. Frankly, *I am scared to die!*" The words of this man undoubtedly express the feeling of many people today regarding the mystery of death. On the other hand, there are persons with a materialistic philosophy of life who feel that the few decades lived upon this planet encircle man's entirety of experience, and who feel that when death comes to an individual he is "through" except for the biological and social influences he leaves in his family and in his community. Chad Walsh leaves an interesting evaluation of such

persons: "The idea that death spells *finis* is a very comfortable one. It means that you can do what you want to while you are alive, and if you are clever enough you can have a very happy time of it, and then die before too many sorrows come your way. Sometimes I wish I could believe it is so, but I am afraid the facts are against it. Whether we like it or not, God has made us to live not seventy years—or the hundred and fifty years that modern medicine may give us—but always."¹

Christianity is a religion which never would have existed had it lacked a faith in life after death, in which Jesus was the first fruits of the resurrection. The crucifixion of Jesus, had it not been followed by his resurrection, would have left for history merely the record of a martyr's tragic death, but not the history of "a saving event" or a great religious movement. In the thinking of the members of the early Church the resurrection of Jesus was God's answer to the demonic forces of the world which put Jesus to death. Their statement of faith was: "When the forces of the world have done their *worst*, God can answer with his *best*. God's ways can never be defeated. The resurrection of Jesus is God's way of acting in history to vindicate the evil forces of the world and to place his seal upon the incarnation of himself in Jesus Christ." With such a faith the Christian devotees of the early Church not only outlived but outdied their

opponents, for they shared the resurrection faith for themselves which they held for their Lord. The logic of the early apostles in their adamant faith in Jesus' resurrection being shared by them ran as follows: "You may meet an argument with another argument, but you cannot meet a fact with an argument; and the fact of Jesus' resurrection taking a band of disheartened disciples at the foot of the cross, and causing them to go out with a note of triumph and to evangelize the Mediterranean world within a generation, is a fact that cannot be discounted."

CURRENT ATTITUDES TOWARD LIFE AFTER DEATH

Various views toward life after death arise in the minds of modern persons.

I.

Some raise the question of where man's continued life takes place. Since the days of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, and Bruno the view is no longer held that our earth is at the center of the universe; heaven has vanished from the heavens, and hell is no longer held as being in the lower regions of our earth. Man lives upon a planet estimated to be over four billion years of age, in an expanding universe sixteen billion years old, which extends six billion light years and

contains hundreds of millions of planets besides our earth. In asking their questions about life after death in the light of these figures, these persons show different moods: despair, awe, defiance, mystery, anguish, indifference, humility, complacency. More "thoughtful" persons within this frame of thought have been influenced by Scientific Humanism, which accepts no religious beliefs not proved by pragmatic, scientifically observed facts. What can be proved by this method about life after death, they say, is thus far shown only in biological heritage, where a person's immortality is left in his children, and in social influence, where the impact of his life on earth leaves impressions which transcend his death. There may be, they further affirm, some scientific evidence for life beyond the grave in psychic research, but such data thus far are too ephemeral for scientific proof.

Those influenced by Scientific Humanism do not affirm that life after death is not possible, for they do not have the facts to prove its impossibility. Rather they are agnostic and skeptical about life after death, and say that until they have tangible facts to prove the reality of life beyond the grave, they will remain agnostic. Of one fact they are sure: "Man is worthy of long remembrance." But beyond this assertion they desire not to venture. "The Humanist substitutes for immortality, what? Faith in the supreme value and self-perfectibility of human personality. When man-

kind comes to that faith, it will be seen that the idea of immortality was an interesting but temporary method of asserting man's supreme worth." ² While in recent decades the Humanist position of persons like Charles Francis Potter has been tempered with a pessimism regarding the "self-perfectibility of human personality" by many of its exponents, the Humanist still sees "immortality" related only to the conservation of social values upon this planet; hence a belief in only social and biological "immortality." Thus for them, if life upon this planet were to be annihilated, "immortality" would be lost.

II.

The attitudes of the persons who have given the Ingersoll Lectures at Harvard University relative to the problem of life after death show the views of solid thinkers about man's continuity beyond the grave. Harold DeWolf has analyzed the presuppositions of their arguments concerning immortality in thirty of these lectures (1896-1934), with the following among the conclusions from their views:

If materialism is true, belief in immortality is unreasonable. . . . Materialism is a discredited theory. . . . Man's self can transcend space and time and discover meaning in the world . . . every argument for immortality presupposes an idealistic metaphysics. . . . What-

ever the personality may be, that is what endures if immortality is true. . . . Biological continuity of the individual with his offspring is usually dismissed as no immortality. . . . Immortality and transmigration are not equivalent. . . . Immortality is (usually) defined as the everlasting duration of the human personality. . . . When we turn to human personality we can only ask, Is there in man anything more permanent than his body? . . . For those who see the perpetuity of personal influence as the true theory regarding immortality the answer is given: One's descendants might come to an end. . . . Belief in immortality of the soul is probably less widely held today than at any other time in history . . . abandoned by a decisive majority often referred to as intellectuals. . . . The belief that man somehow survives death is universal. . . . One who loves life at all is forever becoming more deeply involved in it; and the self-conscious lover of life cannot otherwise than will his own continuous existence. . . . Faith in immortality is in its last analysis faith in God. . . . Immortality of man is based on three great postulates: the moral perfection of God, the reasonableness of the universe, and the worth of human existence. . . . Intuition and revelation lend powerful psychological support to belief in immortality. . . . A good God would not create in man the expectation and desire for immortality, only to deny the anticipated object. . . . Theism implies immortality. . . . Man is needed (in his immortality), for he is a need of God who is father, judge, lover, and king. . . . Man is involved in a polarity of divine image and worthless dust. He is a duality of mysterious grandeur and pompous aridity, a vision of God and a

mountain of dust. It is because of his being an image that his righteousness is expected.³

Such views are those of a type of seasoned thinkers who represent the best and deepest philosophical-theological approaches to the question of life after death. Their answers indicate the pulse of many thoughtful persons regarding immortality, though many are less hopeful in their beliefs.

There are other mature thinkers who would argue that the temper of our modern age is one of absolute skepticism about man's survival beyond the grave. A survey of a few years ago showed that 33 per cent of our American scientists believe in immortality, 41 per cent are disbelievers, and 26 per cent are unsure. While 41 per cent of the physicists believe in immortality and 32 per cent disbelieve, 9 per cent of the psychologists believe in immortality, while 70 per cent disbelieve. Perhaps somewhere in between the statements from the Ingersoll Lectures and those of American scientists the real pulse of the American people about human survival can be found. Figures are lacking, however, to indicate to what degree Jesus' resurrection has affected contemporary man's belief regarding man's immortal nature, or to what degree man's belief or disbelief about human survival has stimulated his attitudes toward Jesus' resurrection.

III.

There are some today who find their chief proof for life after death as they delve into psychic research, backing up their arguments with the new views of science regarding the non-material nature of the universe. Frederick W. H. Myers, Sir Oliver Lodge, Alexis Carrel, and J. B. Rhine are four scholars different in their approaches yet all relating their thoughts to the mental nature of the universe and the validity of extrasensory perception. Wrote Frederick W. H. Myers:

I have assumed that man is an organism informed or possessed by a soul. This view obviously involves the hypothesis that *we are living in two worlds at once*, a planetary life in this material world, to which the organism is intended to react; *and also a cosmic life in that spiritual or metetherial world, which is the native environment of the soul.* . . . I regard each man as at once profoundly unitary and almost infinitely composite, as inherited from earthly ancestors a multiplex and "colonial" organism—a soul which has originated in a spiritual or metetherial environment which even while embodied subsists in that environment; and which will still subsist therein after the body's decay. . . . Of fundamental importance indeed is this doctrine of telepathy. It will be my task to show in many connections how far-reaching are the implications of this direct and supersensory communion of

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mind with mind. Among those implications none can be more momentous than the light thrown by this discovery upon man's intimate nature and possible survival of death. *We gradually discovered that the accounts of apparitions at the moment of death—testifying to a supersensory communication between the dying man and the friend who sees him—led on without perceptible break to apparitions occurring after the death of the person seen, but while that death was not known to the percipient; and thus, apparently due, not to mere brooding memory, but to a continued action of that departed spirit.*⁴ (Italics added.)

The researches of Sir Oliver Lodge led him to see his universe in this manner:

I have gradually come to the view that *the main realities of the Universe are not in matter at all, but in the ether in space*. . . . I hold that in so far as we act on matter at all, we really act on it in a secondary way. *Our relation with the ether is primary*; our relation with matter is secondary. . . . We ask: Shall we survive? Survive what—our temporary and indirect and secondary connection with matter? You see that this question of survival, regarded from my present point of view, is what we used to call a *husteron proteron*—"the cart before the horse." *The marvel is that we are associated with matter at all. That is the peculiar thing*. . . . our association with matter is temporary. . . . The attempt to explain life in terms of matter has failed. . . . *We gradually become convinced that those who have departed are not really isolated from us. By*

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*employing proper means of communication—somewhat as you do when you want to telegraph to a distant friend—you find that the person you knew is still there, that he remembers the things that happened, that his character is unchanged. . . . Memory and character therefore are not in the brain. . . .*⁵ (Italics added.)

Elsewhere, he says:

No science asserts that your personality will cease a quarter of a century hence, nor does any science assert that it began half a century ago. Spiritual existence “before all worlds” is a legitimate creed. . . . We may be all partial incarnations of a larger self. . . .⁶

Thus Sir Oliver Lodge views man’s place in the physical world as a temporary abode, while the spiritual world is his everlasting reality. He discerns that we often have a biased view of the universe, and fail to comprehend the spiritual nature of the universe, because our senses give us but a limited view of the world. Experience of mankind has shown that the higher conceptions of the world, which lie in the realms of the poetic, the artistic, and often also in the realm of the scientific, are in the area of the immaterial and the unseen, which is the world of the ideal. When our spirits attain this ethereal region, no longer imprisoned by the realm of the senses, we shall be unshackled from our limitations of the present world. We shall then be “at home.”

Dr. Alexis Carrel, a medical doctor with the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, also saw the spiritual nature of the universe where extrasensory perception is possible:

The beauty pursued by the mystic is still richer and more indefinable than the ideal of the artist. . . . It requires an elevation of the mind toward a being who is the source of all things . . . whom the mystic calls God. . . . He who wants to undertake this rough and difficult journey must renounce all the things of this world and, finally, himself. . . . He progressively weans himself from himself. . . . His mind escapes from space and time. . . . *He reaches the stage of unitive life . . . He is in God and acts with Him . . . (There is) the existence of a psychic principle capable of evolving outside the limits of our bodies. . . . Sometimes . . . personality seems really to extend beyond physiological duration.*⁷ (Italics added.)

J. B. Rhine of Duke University in recent years in his experiments has reported instances where mind transcended space, in which persons (especially during war years) "knew" about the deaths of loved ones before the news was given them in a conventional way. Clairvoyance and precognition prove that mind can transcend both space and time, which possibly intimates immortality on the scientific level. According to him,

We can say that the ESP (extra-sense perception) research directly raises the question of personality in

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the system of space and time, and that it offers a possible suggestion in favour of survival. . . . *Now all that immortality means is freedom from the effects of space and time; death seems to be purely a matter of coming to a halt in the space-time universe. Therefore the conclusion that there is at least some sort of technical survival would seem to follow as a logical derivation from the ESP research.*⁸ (Italics added.)

Numerous persons today are undoubtedly influenced by the thinking of such persons as Myers, Lodge, Carrel, and Rhine to believe in the spiritual nature of the universe, the non-material nature of the real self, and consequently in the survival of man beyond the grave. When Christian people are convinced of these tenets regarding man and his universe, they are naturally further convinced regarding the reality of Jesus' resurrection from the grave, even though the words "resurrection" and "immortality" may not have quite the same connotation. "There have been those (like C. D. Broad) who have argued that here we have the best of all empirical arguments for a future life."⁹ It must be noted, however, that C. D. Broad feels that Christian thinkers are in error, when they try to prove each individual's survival because of Jesus' resurrection. Broad argues thus:

The case of Jesus would differ from that of any ordinary man in at least two quite fundamental respects. In the first place, if Christianity be true, though Jesus

was human, He was *also* divine. No other human being resembles Him in this respect. Secondly, the body of Jesus did not decay in the tomb, but was transformed; whilst the body of every ordinary man rots and distintegrates soon after his death. Therefore, if men do survive the death of their bodies, the process must be utterly unlike that which took place when Jesus survived His death on the cross. Thus the analogy breaks down in every relevant respect, and so an argument from the resurrection of Jesus to the survival of bodily death by ordinary men is utterly worthless.¹⁰

Psychic research is as yet almost in its infancy, and must be approached with careful scrutiny. Whether Jesus' resurrection is to be "proven" by drawing upon the argument of psychic data seems in many ways an anachronism of modern man, and not the test of his survival after his crucifixion in the New Testament records. Modern man needs two attitudes as he discerns these psychical research data: (1) an open mind, for there is still much to be learned along these areas of thought; (2) a careful and critical mind that constrains him from allowing himself to become absorbed in fanaticism.

IV.

Modern Christian man who believes in the continuity of life beyond the experience of death, whether it be that of the immortality of the soul or the resurrection

of the body, resorts to a number of solid arguments to establish his faith: Mainly he looks at the nature of God, called "Father" by our Lord, whose qualities of mercy and wisdom make it obligatory for God never to annihilate the immortal nature of his children. If this God is both moral and full of grace, immortality is a necessary postulate. Secondly, the experience of the human race, especially as seen through expressions of the great world religions, has shown the universal *belief* and *hope* of man's eternal nature. The transmigration of the soul in Hinduism may be quite different from the general resurrection day of Zoroastrianism, as different religious cultures hold diverse views of life after death; but the common belief and hope are nevertheless there. The argument called *consensus gentium* (universal agreement) is one that is not altogether cast aside.

The conservation of values in the universe is a third argument which has convinced some of life's eternal continuity. If energy is conserved in the universe, how much more necessary is it that minds of men be conserved, if this be a rational universe, runs the argument. Especially if the universe is encompassed by the Spirit of God, such a preservation of values in terms of personalities is presupposed. If man, after his years of struggle to achieve purpose and meaning, is destroyed at death, one could only cry out, "What infinite waste!" Hence from the purpose of man's

creation is deduced the assurance of his immortality.

Others who hold to the rational and moral nature of the universe believe that eternal life is necessary in order to solve the problem of evil. The race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong, they affirm. Often the sinner "gets away" with his sinning and seems to wax prosperous, while the saint bears more than his share of suffering and burdens. Thus seen in a mere space-time temporality the universe is not just. But if seen in terms of the eternal perspective, life after death has opportunity to "balance up" the inequalities as observed in man's short life upon this planet. Along with the argument of God's merciful purpose for man making immortality obligatory, the Christian holds the resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament as his cardinal argument for belief in life after death. Like the theme which unites the various movements of a symphony, the resurrection of Jesus Christ resounds throughout the writings of the New Testament. For many this argument is all-sufficient for faith in life continuing beyond the grave. As Christ was the first fruits of the resurrection, we who are his followers will share in the same reward, they affirm. The Apostle Paul's experience of "Christ in me and I in Christ" reaffirms the story of Jesus' resurrection in the New Testament as a continuing mystical experience of the risen Lord.

As modern man speaks of "life after death," he

occasionally uses terms such as "immortality" and "resurrection" as synonyms, employing them interchangeably. The two terms, however, in their original usage have different connotations: "Immortality" belongs to Greek thought and relates to the fact that the soul continues its existence apart from the body after the body dies. The soul belongs to the eternal world, while the body belongs to the temporal world. The death of Socrates, described by Philo in *Phaedo*, sees death as liberating the soul from its imprisonment and allowing it to return to its eternal home. Socrates, in living his life of philosophic ideas concerned with goodness, truth, and beauty, illustrates how in the present world we already tend to free the soul from the imprisonment within the body. Hence Socrates faces his own death with peace, poise, and without fear, for he is convinced that death will free him from his bodily chains. Had Socrates feared death, it would have indicated that he had been enslaved to the world of sense through his body, which at death he should leave. (A more elaborate description of Socrates' view of immortality is given in Chapter 2.)

Immortality is thus not so much a gift from God as an accomplishment of man and deals with man's emancipation from his temporal body. Hence "immortality" is not a term used in the New Testament, for the focusing point of New Testament thought is that of the *bodily* "resurrection" of Jesus, not the mere

survival of his soul after his bodily death. The resurrection of Jesus and of "everyman" is a gift of God, who in the life beyond the grave gives man another body, namely one that is "glorified" or "spiritual." New Testament thought never conceives man's continuity beyond the grave apart from some kind of "body."

Greek thought differed from biblical thought regarding the physical world and the physical body of man. For the Greeks the physical world and the bodies of men owed their creation to an imperfect deity called the Demiurge. Hence anything physical, like man's body, was inherently sinful through the fact of creation, and thus played no role in immortality, since immortality freed man's soul from this imperfect prison cell. The biblical writers, in comparison, looked upon the whole creation, including the physical world and the bodies of men along with the souls of men, as owing its existence to a wise, loving God, who not only gave men their bodies for present terrestrial living but would also give them "glorified" or "spiritual" bodies for eternal existence (I Cor. 15:35-50). Man is a sinner, not because he has a physical body, but because in his freedom he misuses it. The physical body of man is weak but not inherently sinful, and through its weakness it can become the "occasion" or "opportunity" for sin (Gal. 5:13). "The Hebrew was never afraid of matter. To

him it was not the enemy of the spirit, but the vehicle and guarantee of its effective reality.”¹¹

Immortality and the resurrection have one characteristic in common, according to Ian T. Ramsey: “At the outset let us recognise that all doctrines of a future life, whatever their variety, are alike in one important respect. They all arise as so many versions of one answer to a general logical problem which everyone who formulates religious language must face. The problem is this. In acknowledging any religious topic whatever, we acknowledge something which exceeds spatio-temporal.”¹² The resurrection of Jesus as a “mystery” left its influence upon men living in the spatio-temporal world of Jesus’ day. In the centuries which followed, however, it was an event which was grasped by “faith-knowledge” rather than by empirical knowledge. Men themselves do not contain the quality of deathlessness, but must receive it as a gift from God if they are to overcome the destructive power of death (I Cor. 15:53-54). Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection have shown man a hope and a way by which the corruption of his human life has been effectively overcome (II Tim. 1:10; Rom. 11:7). While the Christian man to a large degree “earns” the award of eternal life by asserting his faith in Christ, the greater means for man’s inheritance of eternal life is through God’s grace extending him this gift.

THREE MODERN THEOLOGIANS VIEW
JESUS' RESURRECTION*Rudolf Otto: The Resurrection as "Numinous Experience"*

Among contemporary theologians who offer vital suggestions to modern man as he contemplates the mystery of Jesus' resurrection, three scholars are especially stimulating: Rudolf Otto, Rudolf Bultmann, and Paul Tillich.

One of the classics in religious thought is *Das Heilige* (1917; *The Idea of the Holy*, 1923), in which Rudolf Otto discriminates between objects in religion which can be thought conceptually (and termed *rational*) and those which can be merely *felt* but not rationalized (termed the *irrational* or *numinous*). God's holiness of God's essence, which holds the universe together and extends billions of light years, cannot be rationalized; it is *numinous*, and can be *felt* only by a humble person with his "creature" feeling upon this planet. God is the "wholly other," too vast in his *mysterium tremendum* to be rationalized by man, but felt by man in his mystical experience. Along with God's holiness Rudolf Otto views the resurrection of Jesus as a *numinous* event, which man cannot rationalize, but feels, "recognizing that the experi-

ences concerned with the Resurrection were mystical experiences and their source 'the Spirit.' " ¹³

The resurrection thus belongs not to empirical sense-knowledge, but to *faith*-knowledge which does not rely on data from the senses. "To speak of 'resurrection' is to utter a mystery, and mystery is a subject of faith, not science." ¹⁴ Both the naïve supernaturalists and the rationalists have erred in not viewing the resurrection as a mystery. The former attempt to prove the resurrection by a sense experience: the tomb was viewed as empty; hence the resurrection of Jesus. The rationalists view the remembered impression of Jesus upon his disciples, especially Peter, as the evidence for belief in the resurrection. Both views err, Rudolf Otto holds, in trying to prove the resurrection so simply: "They both entirely ignore the fundamental fact about the experience, that it was a mystery." ¹⁵

Jesus at his baptism (Mark 1:4-11; Matt. 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22) and in his transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8; Matt. 17:1-8; Luke 9:28-36) possessed mystical experiences with his visions of Call and Ordination. Likewise was Paul's resurrection experience on the Damascus road, "for the vision of Paul is not merely a vision of the Risen Christ, but . . . a vision of Calling and Dedication in which Paul realizes that Christ 'lives as the accepted of God, as the conqueror of Judgment, of the Cross, and of Death.' " ¹⁶ Paul's experience was a *charisma* or "gift of the Spirit," as were

the experiences of Peter and the others in the early Church. "And so the consciousness of the Risen Christ loses its isolated character and is already manifested *as one of a class of spiritual experiences*, a mystical and spiritual apprehension of truth, beyond the opposition of supernaturalism and rationalism." ¹⁷

The "empty tomb" narratives are holy legends, according to Otto, which later develop around the mystical experiences of Christ "in which the suprarational relation of the eternal to the temporal is mirrored in the medium of contemporary thought. They have enduring value to us from the incomparable beauty and power with which they symbolize the essence of the 'mystery.'" ¹⁸

We find this same note of "mystery" in many areas of the New Testament: The writer of the letter to the Ephesians says, "When you read this you can perceive . . . the mystery of Christ" (3:4). In like manner the Gospel of Mark speaks concerning the mystery of the kingdom of God, which can be understood only by those who experience it (4:11). Paul speaks about the mystery of the salvation of the world through faith (Rom. 11:25). I Timothy mentions that deacons "must hold the mystery of faith with a clear conscience" (3:9). Paul discerns evil as the consequence of "the mystery of lawlessness . . . at work" (II Thess. 2:7). Most of the writers of the New Testament are aware of the "mystery" related to most of the great

Christian tenets. We need certainly to retain it when it comes to appreciating the awareness of the risen Christ. Rudolf Otto agrees with Paul's attitude toward the resurrection, "the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:26, 27). . . . "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). It is certainly the devotional approach of the modern mystic who shares Christ's death and resurrection, as he "dies" to his fruits of the flesh—impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing (Gal. 5: 19-21)—and is "resurrected" to the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5: 22, 23).

Rudolf Bultmann: The Resurrection as Myth

"The cosmology of the New Testament is essentially mythical in character," writes Rudolf Bultmann,¹⁹ and it is the purpose of the modern biblical interpreter to "demythologize" these myths for modern man's understanding of the great Christian truths. The three-story universe with its heaven above, its Hades below, and the plain on which earth is set is a cosmological myth,

which must be "demythologized." (Modern man has thus demythologized this three-story world into his own "myth," as he speaks of his "organic universe" called a "macrocosm" while his own self is a "microcosm.") Likewise myth is involved in the dualism of Satan and his demons vying with God and his angels, to be resolved by a cosmic catastrophe of judgment to end the conflict, into which the "saving event" of Jesus comes with his pre-existence, death, resurrection, and expected return, with the Church as the setting for the "saving event." Such Christian mythology, according to Bultmann, is influenced by Jewish apocalyptic and Gnostic redemptive myths. These myths, however, illuminate man's understanding of himself in his world, and express for him the assurance that he can be delivered from the powers of his world by his dependency upon the otherworldly divine powers which govern the world.

The death of Christ, Bultmann continues to assert, is thus both a sacrifice and a cosmic event, in which Christ is both Messiah and the Second Adam. The cross viewed mythologically portrays the pre-existent sinless Son of God whose blood atones us, as he frees us from death in his taking sin and death upon himself. The existential and cosmic value of the cross lies in our taking Christ's cross as our own, the meaning of which through faith is present for believers in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper (Rom.

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6:3, 6; I Cor. 11:23-26) and in the daily life of Christians (Gal. 5:24; Phil. 3:10).

The cross and the resurrection, however, have cosmic unity; they go together, as "he [Jesus] was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). Especially is this emphasized in the Gospel of John, where Christ's being "raised up" has a double meaning: (1) in Jesus being "raised up" in his death on the cross; and (2) in his being "raised up" in glory in his resurrection. Hence "faith in the resurrection is really the same thing as faith in the saving efficacy of the cross, faith in the cross as the cross of Christ."²⁰ But the resurrection in itself as an object of faith is neither a historical nor a mythical event. The disciples did not hold to their belief in the risen Christ because they had found the tomb empty; they heralded his resurrection because they came to believe him to be the risen One. The historical event to which the resurrection is attached is still the actual crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The Easter story cannot be called historical if the resurrection is called an "event"; but it can be termed historical if it is the beginning of the *belief* in the resurrection.

As Bultmann demythologizes the death and resurrection of Jesus, so that it speaks to modern man, who shares this unified event by mystically sharing Christ's death and resurrection, Bultmann sees Paul and John both demythologizing the meaning of Christ's death

and resurrection. Paul writes. "Death is swallowed up in victory" (I Cor. 15:54); Christ "was given up for our offenses, and raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25); the resurrection of Christ has overcome death and brought immortality to light (II Tim. 1:10); those who share Christ's sufferings know the power of his resurrection (Phil. 3:10).*

Likewise the Gospel of John, sometimes called "the Ephesian Gospel," in a similar fashion portrays "realized eschatology" as related to the resurrection of Christ. Its general theme is summed up in these words: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life" (John 3:36); "whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). It is further amplified by such statements as: "He who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. . . . the hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (John 5:24, 25); "if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death" (John 8:52); "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25); "he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (John 12: 25); "and I, when I am lifted up from the

* See Chapter 4, under "Eschatology and the Resurrection," regarding an Ephesian School of Christian Thought to which Paul and "John" belonged, with its effect on their thought concerning the resurrection.

earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32); "the glory which thou hast given me I have given to them:" (John 17:22). In John as in Paul the risen Christ is shared in the mystical experiences of the believers.

Bultmann feels that since demythologizing was begun in the New Testament by Paul and John regarding the resurrection and the eschatology surrounding that event, we today have the necessary right to do our own demythologizing. "Demythologizing," he says, "has its beginning in the New Testament itself; and therefore our task of demythologizing today is justified." ²¹

Paul Tillich: Reality and Symbol of the Resurrection

"'The Cross of Christ' and the 'Resurrection of Christ' are interdependent symbols; they cannot be separated without losing their meaning. The Cross of Christ is the Cross of the one who has conquered the death of existential estrangement. Otherwise it would only be one more tragic event (which it *also* is) in the long history of the tragedy of man. And the Resurrection of the Christ is the Resurrection of the one who, as the Christ, subjected himself to the death of existential estrangement. Otherwise it would be only one more questionable miracle story (which it also is in the records)." ²² So writes Paul Tillich, who sees

the cross and the resurrection as "both reality and symbol," in which something is *really* occurring in both events, though "there is a qualitative difference": the stories of the cross are undoubtedly factual about an event observed in history, while a mystery enshrouds the resurrection event experienced by but a few. While the event on the cross took place as a fact in space and time, it became a symbol and part of the myth about the death of one who conquered the powers of the old eon, when Jesus became the Christ.

Also, the resurrection was a symbol which became a fact, when the disciples believed that Jesus' awful death was that of the Christ. In their certainty of Jesus' resurrection, the disciples gave birth to the Church, "and since the Christ is not the Christ without the Church, he has become the Christ."²³ "It is the certainty of one's own victory over the death of existential estrangement," Tillich further states, "which creates the certainty of the Resurrection of the Christ as event and symbol."²⁴ Thus man's experience of the risen Christ becomes the proof of the resurrection, and gives deeper meaning to the death of Jesus who became the Christ.

Paul Tillich holds to the "restitution theory" regarding the resurrection event, since he sees the fallacies and weaknesses concerning Jesus' resurrection being "proved" by the empty grave, by the "spiritualistic" proof of his presence, and by the psycholog-

ical theory that Jesus' friends merely "remembered" him. In the restitution theory Tillich observes several factors: (1) There is an ecstatic unity between the "New Being" who experiences the resurrection and Jesus of Nazareth; "Jesus is present wherever the New Being is present."²⁵ (2) The basis for the "restitution" of Jesus as the Christ, with its impact on the apostles, is "rooted in the personal unity between Jesus and God," along with the "restitution of Jesus to the dignity of the Christ";²⁶ hence "the experience of the New Being must precede the experience of the Resurrection."²⁷ (3) Such a theory "remains in the realm of probability and does not have the certainty of faith,"²⁸ but faith gives the certitude that the death of Jesus of Nazareth was not able to separate the New Being from the experience of Jesus. (4) Both the story of the cross and the story of the resurrection relate to the pre-existence and the post-existence of Jesus, and hence to the "eternal root of the New Being as it is historically present in the event Jesus the Christ."²⁹

Other occurrences related to Jesus deepen the meaning of this "event": Jesus' birth at Bethlehem is tied into the symbols around the cross, while the virgin birth relates to the symbols surrounding the resurrection. The virgin birth story, like that of the Logos concept, shows "that the saving appearance of the New Being is independent of historical contingencies and dependent on God alone."³⁰ Likewise the symbol

of the second coming “expresses in a special way that Jesus is the Christ . . . who cannot be transcended by anyone else who may appear in the future course of history.”³¹ In the Gospel of John the resurrection of Christ continues as the Spirit which comes from God, and which guides believers into all truth. The ascension indicates Jesus’ separation from historical existence, though the spiritual presence continues as the power of a New Being. Likewise the symbol of Christ sitting at the right hand of God “means that God’s creativity is not separated from the New Being in Christ, but that in its three forms (original, preserving, directing creativity) its final aim is the actualization of the New Being as manifest in Christ.”³²

While Otto, Bultmann, and Tillich represent individualistic views regarding the interpretation and meaning of Jesus’ resurrection, they all belong to what is called the “existentialist” approach. Jesus’ death and resurrection are validated because they speak to man’s experience, and they lie beyond rational explanation. Otto sees the resurrection of Jesus as a *numinous* event. Bultmann views the resurrection as playing a role as a saving event when the cross is seen as that of Jesus *Christ*. Tillich interprets the *fact* and the *symbol* of the cross and the resurrection—the fact of the crucifixion becoming a qualitative symbol, while the symbol of the resurrection becomes a fact

when Jesus' death is believed in as the death of Jesus *Christ*. In the approaches of all three the resurrection of Jesus Christ brings new life into the lives of the disciples, who find an existential relationship with their Lord.

RATIONALISM LOOKS AT THE RESURRECTION

Emil Brunner recognizes the difficulty one encounters who tries to understand what happened to Jesus at the time of his death and his subsequent resurrection: "The resurrection is an incomprehensible event, because it represents the inbreak of the eternal world of God into our temporal sphere. Thus it is something which no man can understand or describe, because it is the cancellation of space-time existence."³³ Such a statement may satisfy the schooled New Testament theologian with his "eye of faith," but others have been more concerned to rationalize the death and the resurrection happenings. While such rational theories do not hold much validity for New Testament scholarship, they are nevertheless still paraded by some as ways to explain these difficult events.

I.

The *swoon theory* presupposes that Jesus had a suspended animation on the cross, and that after this

swoon he was hastened by his friends to a cool cave where he was revived. Hence he appeared to his disciples in the same physical body he previously possessed. Such a theory misses the point of the resurrection as an empowering experience in the lives of Jesus' followers and does not explain what later occurred to Jesus' physical body. "If Jesus had presented Himself merely as one who had been stolen half-dead out of the sepulchre, His appearance would have produced the impression of weakness and helplessness, not that of a conqueror over death and the grave." ³⁴

II.

An even more imaginative hypothesis is called the *telegram theory*, which says that while Jesus was still in the sepulchre he sent spiritual messages or "telegrams" to his disciples, which became for them spiritual manifestations of his appearance. Canon B. H. Streeter sees these visions as "directly caused by the Lord Himself, veritably alive and personally in communion with them . . . able to convince His disciples of His victory over death by some adequate manifestation; possibly by showing Himself to them in some form such as might be covered by St. Paul's phrase 'a spiritual body.'" ³⁵ Such a theory may give to some Christian believers what they feel is the basic

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spiritual worth of the resurrection, but it still leaves the problem of the empty grave unsolved.

III.

The *hallucination theory* rationalizes Jesus' resurrection appearances as the result of the tired, excited condition of his friends. Distressed by the trial events, brokenhearted by his death, longing for his companionship, and with an expectancy of seeing him, their hopes were satisfied by their surety that they had seen him. In their nervous, enervated condition their hopes projected surety that he still remained with them; hence the resurrection reports. Such a theory might satisfy the conditions of some of the women who were the first visitors to the tomb, but it hardly accounts for Jesus' later appearances to the disciples in Galilee, to the five hundred, to Paul on the Damascus road, or to "all the apostles."

IV.

The oldest hypothesis to explain what happened to Jesus' body is that of the *theft theory*. Such a view undoubtedly arose early in the Christian epoch, since one tradition says that Pilate had a guard placed at the tomb (Matt. 25:11-15; 27:62-66). Justin Martyr (ca. A.D. 150, *Dialogue with Trypho*, ch. 17) intimates

that the Jews were still spreading this story of the stolen body in his time: "For (after that) you had crucified Him . . . when you knew that He had risen and ascended to heaven . . . you not only did not repent of the wickedness which you had committed, but at that time you selected and sent out from Jerusalem chosen men through all the land to tell that the godless heresy of the Christians had sprung up, and to publish those things which all they who knew us not speak against." The theory holds that Jesus' disciples stole the body and made pretense that Jesus had been resurrected. Other amplifications say that Joseph of Arimathea, wishing to have the body removed from his family sepulchre to another grave, did so secretly; that the Sanhedrin, hoping to prevent Jesus' followers from going to his grave, bribed Roman soldiers to remove it to another unknown place; that the tired, tearful women at dawn came to the wrong tomb, and finding it empty started the rumor of the resurrection of Jesus; that the young man at the grave in saying, "He is not here; see the place where they laid him," pointed to the next tomb (which was empty), and thus the frightened women ran with the news of the resurrection. Each of these sets of circumstances is easy to conceive and to rationalize regarding the mystery of the empty grave, but such viewpoints fail to explain the continuing power of the resurrection event in the early Church, by which the

Christians conquered persecution, martyrdom, ridicule, and heresy.

V.

The "history of religions" approach to the death and resurrection of Jesus views these events as similar to the myths from other religions of a dying and rising cult god. It points to the stories as related to Attis, Isis, Adonis, and Persephone of the mystery cults which contain the dying and the resurrection of cult deities, and thus considers Christianity as following a similar myth: hence the *myth theory* concerning the resurrection of Jesus. The theory is further bolstered by the facts that the Lord's Day was also the sacred day of the Oriental sun god; that Easter Sunday followed the pagan celebration of spring with new life emerging from the night of winter; and that the "three days" between the death and the resurrection of Jesus was borrowed from the Jewish writings of Jonah 1:17: "For as Jonah was there three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40). Though there may be similarities between facts concerning Jesus' death and resurrection and those of other religions, it still is remembered that Christianity was a historical religion about a historical figure, while Attis, Isis, Osiris, Adonis, Persephone, and Jonah

belong to the realm of mythical figures within the realm of religious mythology.

An evaluation of the Christian hope in immortality as related to Jesus' resurrection, and compared with the mystery religions, is given by P. Bonnard:

While the mystery religions expressed hope in immortality for their devotees who found mystical relationship to their deities, they differed distinctly from the eternal hope in the New Testament. The resurrection of Jesus and of the dead is understood not as a cyclical (seasonal) and cosmic victory of life over death, but as an eschatological and gratuitous act of God who thus ultimately shatters the reign of death. . . . Above all, the New Testament is characterized by the fact that all its affirmations about the resurrection are connected with a historical event which is quite recent: the death and resurrection of Jesus.³⁶

VI.

In recent years, with *renewed interest in psychological research*, the resurrection of Jesus is viewed by the rationalist as an illustration of spiritual communication between Jesus and those who believed on him. More than half a century ago F. W. H. Myers delved into this possibility and was led

. . . to a belief in direct or telepathic intercommunication, not only between the minds of men still on earth, but between minds or spirits still on earth and spirits

departed, and that with the assertion from knowledge of such psychical data all reasonable men, a century hence, will believe the Resurrection of Christ.³⁷

Kirsopp Lake inferred similar possibilities:

To my own mind it seems possible that some evidence to this effect already exists, for phenomena have certainly been registered by observers of high scientific and moral position, which point to the conclusion that men who were known to them personally, and died recently, are still capable of communicating with them.³⁸

If spiritual communication is possible between those of us on earth and those who have left this earthly scene, such evidence of communication between Jesus and his followers is not out of the question. But there is more to be obtained from the "saving event" of Jesus than merely communication with *his resurrected* self: for it is the entire soteriological value derived from Jesus' life, teachings, miracles, and death, upon which the resurrection puts a seal. It is basic in the early Christian Church that the idea of the resurrection was a real historical event; but it is more basic to discern that the resurrection happened to *Jesus Christ*, whose life, teachings, miracles and death had played so important a role in his saviourhood. Along such lines the words of Adolf Harnack still have continuing value as he distinguishes between the Easter *message* and the Easter *faith*:

The Easter *message* tells us of that wonderful event in Joseph of Arimathea's garden . . . of the empty grave . . . of the appearance of the Lord in a transfigured form. . . . it soon begins to tell us, too, of what the risen one said and did. . . . the Easter *faith* is the conviction that the crucified one gained a victory over death; that God is just and powerful; that he who is first-born among many brethren still lives.³⁹

Psychic data somehow do not quite bring the depth of data related to the Easter *faith*; they relate more to the Easter *message*.

Perhaps the rationalist wishes too easy and too definite an answer to the resurrection event. The resurrection is a *numinous* experience, lying in the realm of *mystery*. No event has affected the history of mankind in a higher fashion; yet no event has simultaneously so completely escaped rationalization.* Rudolf Otto is thus right in his analysis of the resurrection as an event which cannot easily be rationalized, claiming it is an experience which lies within the realm of *faith-knowledge*. The concept of the resurrection lying within the realm of the *numi-*

* Karl Barth expresses the enigmatic way by which the resurrection of Jesus relates itself to history: "The Resurrection is the non-historical relating of the whole historical life of Jesus to its origin in God . . . if it be brought within the context of history, it must share in its obscurity and error and essential questionableness." *Epistle to the Romans* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 195, 204.

nous will of course never satisfy the rationalist. But there are rather hard and terse facts which ought to convince the rationalist of the *fact* of the resurrection, though its *mode* must remain a mystery. Four events within the days following Jesus' resurrection bear evidence to its import: (1) the Christian Church, (2) the New Testament, (3) the setting aside of Sunday as the Christian "sabbath," (4) the Lord's Supper as a sacrament of joy and thanksgiving.

The Christian Church began among Jewish devotees whose "Messiah" had been crucified. A crucified Messiah to Jewish persons would have been anathema, since the scriptures had read, "A hanged man is accursed by God" (Deut. 21:23). Had it not been for the resurrection of Jesus, the epoch of his life would have remained the tragedy of a good man; it was his resurrection which "designated (him) Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness" and brought him the appellation "Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 1:4). "As long as theologians hope to take seriously the historical origins of the Church and of its proclamations, understanding the resurrection narratives constitutes the first step in the study of the New Testament."⁴⁰

Nor would we have had our New Testament of twenty-seven books unless the resurrection of Jesus had replied to his crucifixion. The New Testament grew out of the faith of the early Church expressed

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in the chief tenet of the early apostolic message: *Jesus arose on the third day according to the Scriptures*. Without this central note, which runs throughout the New Testament as a symphonic theme, there would have been no fellowship of believers called the Church from whose members came the New Testament. The resurrection of Jesus created the body of believers (the Church), and the body of believers subsequently created the New Testament, both in the initial writing of its gospels, letters, history, and apocalypse, and in the final canonization of twenty-seven books as the Council of Carthage in 397.

The rationalist must evaluate these four events in the life of the early Christian movement as stemming from the resurrection of Jesus, not as proofs of the *mode* of Jesus' resurrection, but as evidence of the *fact* of his resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus Christ will ever remain a mystery, though at the same time a reality which changed the course of history. "We have here to do," says Richard R. Niebuhr, "not with an intellectual riddle, but with an original and indivisible mystery: action and response, occurrence and interpretation. It was the total event which served in its last impact as the organizing moment for the community's past, present, and future." ⁴¹

TWO

THE WORLD
INTO WHICH
CHRISTIANITY
WAS BORN

CHRISTIANITY is the only world religion which had a Bible from its earliest beginnings: it had the Law and the Prophets of the mother faith, Judaism, each becoming scripture during a time of national crisis. The law books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) began to be brought together in the sixth century B.C. at the time of the Babylonian Exile and the destruction of the Temple (586 B.C.), and were read as scripture about 400 B.C. The books called the Prophets (which, besides the writings of the literary prophets, included Jonah, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings) were collected to combat the Hellenizing of Palestine around 200 B.C. The third part of the Old Testament, the Writings, was added to the Law and the Prophets at the Council of Jamnia about A.D. 90, after the advent of Christianity as a competitive religion and the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. In these scriptures we find the chief religious ideas of Judaism, including those on the resurrection. It was

from these ideas, along with some from the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha, that Jesus and his interpreters found their heritage of ideas in religion. Other ideas came also from rabbinical teachings.

HEBREW THOUGHT ABOUT LIFE AFTER DEATH

The early Hebrews were more concerned with the continuing life of the nation than with the individual. Early Hebrew thought has no concept of judgment or salvation after death, nor was death conceived as the termination of man's existence. (The Sadducees based their disbelief in the resurrection on the individual, since the only writings held by them as scriptures, the Law, they said was silent about the individual's resurrection. The rabbis later taught in the Mishna that the resurrection can be inferred from the Law, which Jesus seems to have shared [Mark 12:24-27].) Life beyond the grave was considered an undesirable quality of existence, to be avoided as long as possible, and located in a gloomy part of the earth called Sheol, translated as "Hades" in the Septuagint and the New Testament (described in Isa. 14:9-11; Ezek. 32:17-32, Job 3:17-19). In Sheol the whole self, including body and soul, remained in a lifeless, enervated existence. Hence, when in later Judaism the hope for a future life emerges, the resurrection of both soul *and* body takes place. With Israel's

earliest hope for the future concerned with the nation rather than the individual, an individual would thus share the nation's future reward of the "new age" only if he were yet alive; otherwise it was only a joy which he anticipated for his descendants to experience. Hosea is concerned with the restoration of the nation rather than the individual's resurrection when he points to the future of a repentant nation forgiven by God's mercy: "Come, let us return to the Lord. . . . After two days he will revive us; and on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him" (6:1,2). Ezekiel, concerned with national restoration and desiring to arouse the exiles in Babylonia to return to their homeland Judah, views God as one who can take the "bones" of the nation and give resurrection to the nation: "Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves. . . . You shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land" (37:11-14). Ezekiel, in his hopes for Judah and Israel, teaches that the God who can resurrect a man from the dead can also resurrect a nation (37:15-28). Second Isaiah, in depicting Israel as a suffering servant, views the nation's future resurrection: "He shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand" (53:10). In these three prophecies of Hosea,

Ezekiel, and II Isaiah the downtrodden nation will thus be resurrected into a future glory by the power of God, and the individual will share this national resurrection in so far as he is faithful to the Lord and is alive to share its joys.

Hebrew thought also saw the resurrection of the individual and the nation as paralleling one another. Rabbinic thought from the end of the first century of Christianity taught the immediate judgment of the individual at death, an idea which remained current in Judaism. Isaiah cries out in a prayer for individuals who are loyal to the land of Judah: "Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! for thy dew is a dew of light, and on the land of the shades thou wilt let it fall" (26:19). Daniel, out of the turmoil of the Maccabean rebellion against the Seleucids, sees the individual sharing the resurrection day with the nation: "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (12:2). Daniel here makes another innovation: both the evil and the sinful, instead of remaining in Sheol, will be resurrected and judged. (See Isa. 66:24 also regarding eternal punishment of the flesh.)

The Hebrew world, whose cosmology was inherited by the writers of the New Testament, was a three-story affair: heaven above, Sheol below, and the earth

where men lived. In early Hebrew thought God had nothing to do with Sheol, as it was detached from his reign. Hezekiah believes that death separates man from Yahweh. "For Sheol cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth" (Isa. 38:18). The psalmists likewise sing: "My life draws near to Sheol. I am reckoned among those who go down to the pit . . . like one forsaken among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, like those whom thou dost remember no more, for they are cut off from thy hand" (Ps. 88:3-5). "In death there is no remembrance of thee; in Sheol who can give thee praise" (Ps. 6:5).

As Yahweh began to be recognized as the Lord of heaven and earth, his sovereignty began to reach into Sheol, where his justice might be meted. Yahweh's universality, including Sheol, is beautifully brought out in Psalm 139:7-9: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend into heaven thou art there! If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there!" Job likewise recognizes Yahweh's sovereignty in Sheol, when in his agony he cries, "O that thou wouldst hide me in Sheol, that thou wouldst conceal me until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst set me a set time, and remember me" (14:13). Again, the Psalmist cries out, "God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me" (Ps. 49:15).

It is in the drama of Job where we first find in the Old Testament man's desire and faith to possess a life beyond death: "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then without my flesh I shall see God" (Job 19:25, 26).

In the Apocrypha we find persistent passages regarding beliefs and facts regarding the resurrection in two books, Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon. Ecclesiasticus is written from the viewpoint of the Sadducees, who did not believe in life after death, while the Wisdom of Solomon is written with the slant of the Pharisees, who believed in the continuity of the righteous man's soul beyond the grave. Ecclesiasticus, one of the longest and most important books of the Apocrypha, was translated into the Greek by the grandson of Ben Sira (ca. 130 B.C.) to impart his grandfather's wisdom to the Jews of Alexandria, Egypt.* High insights come when he praises the continuing influence of great men (chapters 44-50), but as a Sadducee he is reticent about the resurrection of the individual, believing that here on earth we reap what we sow; and even though the sinful man may seem to prosper for a time, God brings retribution

* Jesus Ben Sira, a brilliant Jewish scholar of Palestine, organized his lecture notes as given to his students in the Hebrew about 180 B.C. Fifty years later, his grandson translated Ecclesiasticus ("The Church Book") into the Greek.

upon him in his last days, so that his former apparent joys and success are erased (11:15-12:27).

The Wisdom of Solomon, however, shows the Pharisaic faith in the resurrection of the dead. Writing about 125 B.C. the author has in mind all Jews as his readers, and Alexandrian Jews in particular. Influenced by Platonic thought, he sees man as inherently immortal, not relegated to a dismal Sheol if he is righteous, but to "a place of great delight in the temple of the Lord" (3:14; 5:15, 16); the sinful by contrast will suffer torment (4:18-20; 17-21). Man reaps after death what he has sown before death, and the final judgment will determine man's rewards and punishments (3:18; 4:20). Righteous persons need have no fear of death, because "the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them . . . they are at peace. For though in the sight of man they were punished, their hope was full of immortality. . . . God tested them and found them worthy of himself" (3:1-5). Such a book meant much to the early Christians with their faith in life after death. They also saw in the Wisdom of Solomon a statement which they believed (though incorrectly) had reference to the crucifixion of Christ: "Blessed is the wood through which righteousness comes" (14:7). The Wisdom of Solomon departs from the usual Jewish teaching regarding the resurrection of the body, stressing more the immortality of the soul.

Another book in the Apocrypha, II Maccabees, goes into the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Coming out of the Maccabean period, around 150 B.C., it portrays the rewards and punishments for the righteous and the sinners: "You have not escaped the judgment of the almighty, all-seeing God. For our brothers after enduring a brief suffering have drunk of ever-flowing life under God's covenant; but you, by the judgment of God, will receive just punishment for your arrogance" (7:36, 37). The resurrection will be such as to include the restoration of the body, with members of one's family reunited: "The Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of men and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again" (7:23; also see 7:11). "Accept death, so that in God's mercy I may get you back again with your brothers" (7:29), is the advice of a mother to her son.

Two writings from the Pseudepigrapha portray ideas from Jewish thought about the resurrection which lent value to Christian thinking on the resurrection of the individual: the Apocalypse of Baruch and the Book of Enoch. Each of these writings is an apocalypse, a type of writing frowned upon by Judaism especially after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, (later to be labelled "heresy" by the rabbis), but a type of thought which influenced the New Testament writers. The Apocalypse of Baruch brings together its

ideas around A.D. 50-90, contemporaneous with the New Testament writings though reflecting earlier Jewish thought. Its chapters are described as "the last noble utterance of Judaism before it plunged into the dark and oppressive years that followed the destruction of Jerusalem."¹ Written by Pharisaic Jews and intended for Judaism as a polemic against Christianity, it became more popular with the Christians than with the Jews, and was preserved by the Syrian Christian Church. Some of its thoughts on the resurrection closely parallel the thinking of Paul (I Cor. 15:35-50). It views the resurrection of bodies from the dead in their original physical form, so that they may be recognized by their loved ones, after which they are transmuted into their spiritual bodies which are eternal (49:2-51). The spiritual or transformed bodies will possess "the splendor of angels" (51:5); "they shall be made like unto angels, and be made equal to the stars, and they shall be changed into every form they desire, from beauty into loveliness, and from light into the splendor of glory" (51:10). When Baruch asks the Mighty One, "In what shape will those live who live in thy days?" (49:2), He answers, "The earth shall then assuredly restore the dead (which it now receives in order to preserve them). It shall make no change in their form, but as it has received, so shall it restore them. For then it will be necessary to show the living that the dead come to life again. . . . And it

shall come to pass, when that appointed day has gone by, that then shall the aspect of those who are condemned be afterwards changed, and the glory of those who are justified . . . their splendor shall be glorified into changes, and the form of their face shall be turned into the light of their beauty, that they may be able to acquire and receive the world which does not die, which is then promised to them" (50:2-51:3).

The most important writing in the Pseudepigrapha is the Book of Enoch, which was "lost" for many centuries because of being banned in the fourth century by church leaders such as Hilary, Jerome, and Augustine. Only since James Bruce in 1773 brought back from Abyssinia an Ethiopic version of Enoch, from which Richard Laurence made a modern translation into English (in 1821, and later in 1838), has Enoch received due attention. Compiled from writings by several individuals and reflecting the religious development of Judaism from 200 B.C. to A.D. 100, it portrays many theological ideas, especially those concerned with eschatology and the resurrection, which left their impress on New Testament thinking.* It sees the Son of Man (also called "the anointed one,"

* James Bruce, a celebrated traveller from Scotland, explored Abyssinia (1768-1773), and brought back the three manuscripts of the Book of Enoch. One of these manuscripts, the Bodelian, was translated into the English by Richard Laurence, first in 1821 and later in a revised edition in 1838. Richard Laurence, a professor of Hebrew at Oxford University, later became Archbishop of Cashel.

The World into which Christianity Was Born

“the righteous one,” and “the elect one”) as an individual; Sheol is described as an abyss of fire which has been created by Semjaza and his angels (10:6, 13). Yet to the righteous in Sheol we find these words of hope:

Fear ye not, ye souls of the righteous,
And be hopeful ye that have died in righteousness.
And grieve not if your soul into Sheol has descended
in grief,
And that in your life your body fared not according to
your goodness,
Wait for the day of the judgment of sinners
And for the day of cursing and chastisement. . . .
I know a mystery . . .
That all goodness and joy and glory are prepared for
them,
And written down for the spirits of those who have
died in righteousness,
And that manifold good shall be given to you in recompense
for your labors,
And that your lot is abundantly beyond the lot of the
living.
And the spirits of you who have died in righteousness
shall live and rejoice,
And their spirits shall not perish, nor their memorial
from the face of the Great One
Unto all generations of the world; wherefore no longer
fear their contumely.
Woe to you sinners. . . .
And judgment has not been executed on them during
their life.

The Meaning and Mystery of the Resurrection

Know ye, that their souls will be made to descend into
Sheol

And they shall be wretched in their great tribulation.
(102:4-103:7)

Various views regarding the resurrection of the dead are thus found in later Jewish writings, the last two in Enoch: (1) Only the soul is immortal; the body does not share the resurrection (Wisd. of Sol. 3:1, 4:7, 5:16, 8:20; Bk. Jub. 23:30); (2) all mankind will rise on the resurrection day (4 Ezra 7:32, 37; Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs 10:6-8); (3) all Israelites will rise (Dan. 12:2; II Macc. 7:9; Apoc. Bar. 50-51:6; En. 1-36 [excepting 22-13], 37-70, 83-90); (4) all righteous Israelites will rise on the resurrection day (Isa. 25:8, 36-19; Pss. 16:10, 11; 17:15; 49:15; 73:24-27; Job 14:13-15, 29:26-27; Apoc. Bar. 30; Pss. Sol. 3:16; 13:9, 14:7, 15:15; En. 91-104). From these four views the scriptural references indicate that Enoch saw the resurrection day as shared only by Israelites, not by the Gentiles, an idea which points to the non-Israelites as continuing to share the gloomy and retributive place of Sheol. Such a view may have prevailed when the writer of I Peter has Christ going into Sheol, "put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah . . . the gospel was preached even to the dead, that though

judged in the flesh like men, they might live in the spirit like God" (I Pet. 3:18-20; 4:6).

Here I Peter differs from Enoch, since in I Peter all mankind, both Israelites who had not had opportunity to be saved by faith in Christ and all Gentiles who lived before the time of Christ, are thus given a chance to share the glories and the rewards of the resurrection day.

Out of this milieu of Jewish thought various religious parties held diverse attitudes toward life after death: The Sadducees with their only authority from the Law, which they held was silent about the resurrection, saw all mankind remaining in a gloomy Sheol; the Essenes in their ascetic type of life believed the immortality of the soul to be accomplished in quiet, pietistic community living.* The Pharisees represented the "popular" concept of the resurrection, one which was originally held by the Apostle Paul. Unlike the Sadducees, who held only to the authority of

* Within the Khirbet Qumran community scriptures, The Dead Sea Scrolls, there are occasional mentions of life after death: In a Thanksgiving psalm are these words: "And I know that there is hope for him whom thou hast formed from the dust for the eternal assembly." In another Thanksgiving psalm prayers are offered to God who is in "the assembly of the holy ones." In the Manual of Discipline the righteous are mentioned as having "eternal joy in the life of the eternity," while followers of Belial will suffer eternal punishment; the righteous will cherish eternal life in company with the angels. If the members of the Qumran community were not Essenes, they at least held numerous religious beliefs similar to those of the Essenes.

the Law, the Pharisees placed even greater emphasis on religious authority given by the rabbis in their oral interpretation of the Law. The rabbis taught that rewards and punishments would be meted out on the judgment day, when the righteous would find the joining of the body and soul through the resurrection, while the unrighteous would die their "second death," thus being denied the enjoyment of the fruits of the resurrection day. The Pharisees thus laid a tangible background out of which one can appreciate the meaning of the resurrection in the New Testament, since both Jesus and Paul seem deeply affected by them in their teaching about the resurrection.

The Old Testament, covering a period of eighteen hundred years, naturally has different sets of religious-theological ideas, with some of its concepts showing the influences of tangent secular and religious cultures. Two patterns of religious thought are especially noted in the Old Testament: the *prophetic* and the *apocalyptic*. They differ in several ways, though each in its unique way holds hope for the destiny of faithful members of Judaism. Prophetic writings, with their hope for the future, played their greatest role in the times before the Babylonian exile (597-538 B.C.). The prophet looked upon history as the place where God in his closeness to men would help them bring about his kingdom on earth. Prophetic thought held a belief that men through struggle and co-operation with God

could slowly overcome the evil forces on earth, especially through a messianic leader of the line of David, an ideal king who would give leadership to God's chosen people. This new age, God's kingdom, might be slow in arriving, and at times it would have reversals; but it would eventually and gradually arrive, for God was one who never could be defeated in his earthly plan. Prophetic thought held to a social gospel, which encouraged faithful persons to work for moral righteousness and social justice. Amos with his cry, "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everlasting stream" (Amos 5:24), sounded the clarion cry for the note of prophecy with its stress on social righteousness.* Jeremiah with his hope for the Jews in their homeland after the exile (30-32), Ezekiel with his dream of the New Age after the Babylonian captivity (38-16-28), and Isaiah with his stress on the ideal leader as one who would possess "the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord" (Isa. 11:12) are poignant illustrations of the prophetic concern for eschatology. The prophets are thus mainly concerned with the nation becoming the setting for God's kingdom coming on earth, and have almost no concern with the resurrection of the individual person from the dead.

* Amos (5:18, 20) views the Day of Yahweh as the day of judgment, an idea also developed in Joel 2:30 f., 3:12-14; Ezekiel 38, 39; Zechariah 14:3, 12; and elsewhere.

After the Babylonian Exile, hope for the new age coming in the prophetic fashion gradually began to be a lost dream, yet a hope that might recur if God would intervene "from above" through a heavenly sent messenger on a resurrection day. This world was too much in the hands of demonic forces to be conquered by any earthly leader with his faithful followers; the present world was doomed and could not be improved. In fact, life upon this planet would get worse and worse, until some awful calamity would occur which would invite God's interference into the world with a cataclysmic end of things. Then would come the judgment day, with God's faithful servants inheriting the resurrected life, and evil persons receiving their punishment. This post-Exilic pattern of eschatology is known as *apocalyptic*. Sometimes this kind of thought discerned an evil power, such as Satan with personal demons at work in the world, trying to defeat God with his angels and archangels. Both *prophetic* and *apocalyptic* thought held dreams for the future, when God and his faithful followers would win, but in different ways. The prophets placed almost no stress on the resurrection of the dead, seeing the reward as for those of the generation in which God's kingdom would arrive. The apocalyptists, however, looked forward to a resurrection day, when Sheol would give up all the dead, some to receive the rewards of eternal life with its glories, while the evil

would die "the second death" receiving their punishments.

Just *how* and *from where* Jewish thought moved from the prophetic this-worldly kind of thought into the belief in apocalyptic ideas with hope for the resurrection from the dead is not clear. Some believe that this shift of thought was inherent in Judaism, while others believe that through the influence of Zoroastrianism Judaism moved into the apocalyptic note. Those who favor the latter see Persia as a world power (538-332 B.C.), whose religion was Zoroastrianism, leaving her influence: In the apocalyptic thought of Zoroastrianism one finds a wise and personal God, Ahura Mazda, contending with Angra Mainyu, the power of darkness and evil; Ahura Mazda has his angels to help him, while Angra Mainyu has his demons. In Zoroastrianism one has the story of mankind covering a period of 12,000 years, during the last 1,000 years the arrival of the savior Soshyant, through whom Ahura Mazda will bring about the 57-year judgment day, when all mankind will be resurrected from their graves, the followers of Ahura Mazda to receive their rewards, and the followers of Angra Mainyu to receive their punishments. Zoroastrianism says of the resurrection body: "Whoever has been the size of a man, they restore him then with an age of forty years; they who have been little when not dead, they restore them with an age of fifteen years; and

they give every one his wife, and show him his children with his wife; so that they act as now in the world, but there is no begetting" (*Bundahis*, Ch. XXX). Hence recognition of loved ones and reunion of families are woven into Zoroastrianism thought regarding the resurrection. For those who wonder about the possibility of the resurrection of the dead, Zoroastrianism has an answer: "Observe that when that which was not was then produced (that is, human beings with all their earthly qualities), why is it not possible to produce again that which was? For at that time one will demand the bone from the spirit of earth, the blood from water, the hair from plants, and the life from fire, since they were delivered to them in their original creation" (*Bundahis*, Ch. XXX). Athenagoras and other early Christians used the same answer, but with reference to the dispersed particles of the body rather than to any particular aspects of it such as life, spirit, or hair.

Whether later Judaism, with its views of the resurrection of the dead, borrowed such ideas from Zoroastrianism or developed these concepts within her own thought structure is a matter of discussion. One thing is clear: later Judaism, especially the Pharisees, did cherish similar ideas about man's existence beyond death, which left an impress upon the thinking of the New Testament, particularly through Jesus and Paul.

HELLENISTIC INFLUENCES

According to most New Testament scholars, each of the twenty-seven writings of the New Testament was written in the Greek language to settings on Hellenistic soil, spanning geography from Antioch (Syria) in the east to Rome in the west. Consequently, the people who were the first readers of the writings which were to become the New Testament were influenced by both Jewish and Hellenistic thought. Those of the synagogue who were evangelized into the Christian faith were schooled primarily in Jewish thought concerning such ideas as the resurrection. Converts to Christianity coming from Hellenistic culture were imbued with both philosophic and mystery religion concepts. And some converts were touched by both Greek and Jewish cultures.

Both Jesus and Paul were Jews, and their concepts of the resurrection were primarily those inherited from Judaism. But there were also basic ideas on Hellenistic soil concerning immortality and the resurrection: (1) from the mystery religions; (2) from Greek philosophy. Greek thought about life after death began in a meager way with Homer in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, where it was taught that ghostly resemblances of mortals existed after death in Hades, imprisoned there by the stream of Oceanus. Most persons remained in such a dreary place, with only a few

receiving punishment or reward for deeds done on earth. Pythagoras (ca. 500 B.C.), drawing upon Orphism, viewed man as transmigrating from body to body, the ultimate salvation of his soul hastened by abstaining from those things which pleased the flesh. Both Orpheus and Pythagoras were considered by their devotees as half-divine, half-human figures who had journeyed to the other world and had returned. Through Plato, however, Orphic ideas of immortality wove their way permanently into Greek thought, with Plato's thinking about the soul and its immortality much indebted to Orphic and Pythagorean ideas.

In the *Phaedo* we find through Plato via Socrates' conversation with his friends the arguments for belief in immortality: Socrates believes that the philosopher as the chattel of God is willing to die whenever necessary, since the gods will care for him in an existence more joyful and abundant than the present one. He holds this belief in the rewards of immortality because he has faith in the goodness of the Divine. The true philosopher, he adds, is daily rehearsing immortality, in which he is attempting to free himself from the dominion of his body. Thus he does not fear death, for each day he has been practicing the art of "dying." Such a view, though reasonable to the philosopher, seems ridiculous to the man on the street. Similar to the Orphic concepts of rebirth, Socrates sees experience composed of opposites: life comes from death,

death comes from life; hence our faith must be that coming alive again is the opposite of dying. Socrates adds a further argument for belief in immortality in pointing out that every person has some experience which he "feels" he has had in a similar way at some previous time—an argument for the pre-existence of a person's soul. To sum it up: Socrates concludes that only the soul which possesses a love for wisdom can attain divinity, and hence immortality, the soul being that part of man which "harmonizes" the other parts of his body. For Socrates, as well as for Plato, a belief in immortality must be an act of faith, lying within the realm of faith-knowledge; and through reason the soul of man lays hold of the immortal. Whether Plato believed that man's soul retained its individuality after death is not clear; though it seems right to *infer* that with his great stress upon individuality he held to the immortality of the individual soul. As man lays hold of the "forms" or "ideas" of goodness, truth, and beauty, he comes into companionship with that which exists in the mind of God, and which composes the eternal and perfect "real" world, while the phenomenal world is temporal and imperfect.

Socrates, as interpreted by Plato in the *Dialogues* and *Phaedo*, thus viewed life as a prologue or rehearsal for death. All souls were of divine origin under divine guidance. Before his judges Socrates exclaimed, "Those of us who think that death is an evil are in

error. . . . Wherefore, O judges, be of good cheer about death, and know this of a truth—that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death.” Shortly before his death Socrates further affirmed, “Fair is the prize, and the hope great! . . . I say, let a man be of good cheer about his soul . . . who has adorned the soul in her own proper jewels, which are temperance, and justice, and courage, and nobility, and truth—in these arrayed she is ready to go on her journey . . . when her time comes.” When Socrates is asked by Crito, “In what way would you have us bury you?” Socrates replies, “In any way that you like, only you must get hold of me, and take care that I do not walk away from you. . . . Be of good cheer, then, my dear Crito, and say that you are burying my body only, and do with that as is usual, and as you think best.” Before Socrates raises the cup of poison to his lips he says, “I may and must pray to the gods to prosper my journey from this to the other world—may this then, which is my prayer, be granted to me.” To his friends about him he says, “Be quiet then, and have patience.” The living parable of the death of Socrates, coupled with his (Plato’s) views of the soul and immortality, portrays Greek thought at its best regarding views of life beyond the grave.

Philosophic concepts appealed primarily to the better-educated classes, while the mystery religions were more appreciated by the lower and middle class peo-

ple. Both views were concerned with the immortality of the soul, but by different reasons. In Egypt the Isis-Osiris cult prevailed: Osiris as the god of the dead helped each individual soul to triumph over the perils which awaited his soul. Called by Isis after conversing with the priests in the temple and abstaining from animal food and wine, the devotee imagines himself transported to the other world and brought face to face with the gods, before he is brought back again to this earthly life. Thus born anew through this experience, he is able through the providence of the goddess to be assured of eternal salvation. In a similar way at Athens the cult of Attis existed, whereby the initiate by smearing his body with mud and bran was able to purify his body and thus attain immortality.

In the Eleusinian mysteries at Eleusis, located between Athens and Corinth, the Hymn to Demeter gives the background for the beliefs of this cult: Persephone, in gathering flowers, was seized by Pluto and taken to Hades, where she was enthroned as queen of the netherworld. Her earth mother Demeter angered at her daughter's imprisonment, curtailed the harvest of grain until Persephone returned to her. Zeus, father of Pluto, caused Persephone's return, only after Pluto had made her swallow a pomegranate seed, whose potencies brought her back each year to Pluto. Devotees to the Eleusinian cult through initiation into its secrets obtained the "mysteries" whereby

they would possess salvation and immortality. While the death and resurrection of the deity in some of the mystery cults is a characteristic note, such an idea is not universal. Most of the mystery cults, however, gave assurance of salvation and immortality to its devotees through a cult meal and baptism which united them to their immortal cult deity. While both the mystery cults and Christianity had similarities in stressing voluntary joining, no castes, a belief in immortality, and a relationship to their deity through a meal and baptism, the mystery religions were different from Christianity: the Lord of Christianity was a real historical person; Christianity embraced the salvation of the world; Christianity possessed a moral earnestness; Christianity's ritual was not secretive nor esoteric, but observed by all; Christianity possessed along with Judaism a deep eschatological note. Edwyn R. Bevan lends a careful comparison:

Whereas for pagan thought the world-process was an eternal vain recurrence, a circular movement leading nowhere, for Jews and for Christians it was a movement from a unique beginning to a unique end, from Creation to the final Judgment and realization of the kingdom of God. For the pagan, the deliverance offered by a mystery-religion was a merely individual escape to a higher plane of being; for the Christian, salvation meant being incorporated in a society, which had a cause to fight for in the world and a confidence of ultimate victory.²

GNOSTIC VIEW OF ESCHATOLOGY AND
LIFE AFTER DEATH

While some Christian concepts about the resurrection of Jesus and of man were affected by ideas from Judaism, and possibly by the mystery cults and philosophy, some Christian thoughts were also focused and framed in order to meet the concepts of the first great heresy within Christian circles: Gnosticism. Just how soon Gnosticism became a heresy within Christianity, rather than a competitive system of thought outside Christianity, is not clear. Most scholars agree that writings like the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Gospel of John, and some of the later letters like Jude, I Peter, I and II John are silhouetted against the Gnostic heresy. Especially as a person reads the stories of Jesus' resurrection in the Gospel of John does he discern the gospel records attempting to answer the Gnostic thinkers regarding Jesus' resurrection. Paul in his letter to the Colossians is showing Christianity as superior to Gnosticism as a competitive movement rather than a heresy, though in several places Gnosticism as a heresy seems possible, when he writes, "Christ was descended from the line of David *according to the flesh*" (Rom. 1:3); Christ was *born of woman*, born under the law" (Gal. 4:4, 5).

Gnosticism is not an easy term to define, since it is involved in a number of systems of thought and has a

variety of meanings. Basically it is a system of thought in which knowledge (*gnosis*) is revealed to the members of the cult, and salvation is concerned with redemption of the inner, spiritual man, to release his soul from the imprisonment of his body. The devotee of Gnosticism learns secrets of salvation through sacramental rites, through ecstatic trances, or through initiation into the gnostic group where the revealed secrets of divine knowledge are given to him. The Gnostics view the physical world and the physical bodies of men as created by the Demiurge, an imperfect creator; hence the physical bodies of men are created inherently evil and play no part in the salvation of the total man. Jesus, according to the Gnostic heretics (Docetists), had no physical body; else how could he have been perfect? They thus endangered Jesus' incarnation in the flesh and his physical suffering on the cross, with certain Gnostics saying that Christ came into the man Jesus at his baptism and went back to the Father before his crucifixion. One Gnostic, Basilides, suggested that Simon the Cyrenian died on the cross in place of Jesus. The Gnostics eliminate the use of the Old Testament for Christians, since they call it the story of the creator God, or Demiurge, and hold only to the "New Testament" Christian writings as the story of the Saviour God. Naturally the Gnostic would put no stress upon Jesus' bodily resurrection. The Gospel of John seems in many instances

to place stress on Jesus' physical "appearances" during his resurrection visits to his friends, in order to show that *even after his death* touches of Jesus' real physical self continued to "appear": Jesus thirsts on the cross (19:28); blood and water come from his pierced side (19:34); Mary thought Jesus was the gardener (20:15)); he shows his side and his hands to his disciples (20:20); Thomas believes after seeing Jesus' pierced hands and side (20:24f.); Jesus stands on the beach (21:4f.) and eats with his disciples (21:9f.). While the Gospel of John stresses the spiritual resurrection of Christ as one who speaks spiritually to his believers,* it also gives these several physical "appearances" in answer to the Gnostic heresy.

A study of the religious cults and movements of the first century of the Christian Era impresses one that all groups were searching for an answer regarding what occurs to man beyond the grave. Replies as to *how* and as to the *mode* of man living beyond this earthly experience vary greatly among these searches for understanding the mystery of immortality or the

* Jesus Christ speaks as "I" 117 times to his followers in the Gospel of John, compared to his use of "I" fifteen times in the Gospel of Matthew, ten times in the Gospel of Luke, and nine times in the Gospel of Mark. The spiritual voice in the Gospel of John is the resurrected Lord of Christian experience, speaking to believers as they reflect upon the meaning which Jesus' earthly life, teachings, miracles, death, and resurrection has for them ca. A.D. 100.

resurrection. But all these movements were concerned about an answer to the problem, for one of man's greatest quests is finding hope for the immortal life. That is why, in such a setting of the first century, Christianity won attentive listeners and found many converts, for it had a ready answer: *Jesus was resurrected from the dead, and as the first fruits of the resurrection he has made the resurrected life a promise for all those who believe on him and follow him.*

THREE

THE EMERGING
STORY OF THE
RESURRECTION IN THE
NEW TESTAMENT

TO STAND in a great theological library and ponder the many volumes concerned with the person of Jesus is an awesome experience. "Why have the greatest minds of the Christian centuries delved so deeply into the meaning of Jesus Christ?" is everyman's perennial question. Shirley Jackson Case has poignantly stated the mystery which surrounds the figure of Jesus Christ as we contemplate *who* he was and *why*: "Jesus is the enigma of the centuries. What to make of him has been a puzzle to both the saints and the skeptics. . . . At the present time, in those lands where Christianity is the prevailing religion, Jesus is the most generally admired and highly revered individual in all history." ¹ Twenty-seven writings composing the New Testament are attempts to interpret the meaning of Jesus through gospels, letters, history, and apocalypse to the early Christian churches of the first and second centuries. Fifty-five Christological titles are woven into the language of the New Testament writers to

glorify the significance of his personality. Among the more important ones are Son of God, Son of Man, Lord, Son of David, Prophet, Servant, Christ; among other important titles we find King, Judge, Righteous One, Saviour, Paraclete, Alpha and Omega, Bread of Life, High Priest.

JESUS AS A HISTORICAL PERSONALITY

However, before a person can interpret the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus, he wishes to understand Jesus the historical person. The resurrection of Jesus Christ would never have eventuated if Jesus had not deeply influenced his friends and followers during his earthly ministry. In a recent book about Jesus, entitled *Saved by His Life*, the author says, "For the most part in Christian theology, the spotlight has steadily shown upon the Cross with an occasional beam sent in the direction of the Incarnation. What is needed is not a spotlight to be played upon one or the other of the events of Jesus' life, but rather a floodlight to shine upon the Total Event including the Incarnation, Cross, and Resurrection."² It is through the life, the teachings, the incarnation, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus that man finds "the saving event" through Jesus Christ. Then he later adds: "This, of course, is not to say that the Resurrection is any *more important* than the Cross or Incarnation. But it is to

say, with the New Testament, that the Incarnation and the Cross are incomplete without the Resurrection. In fact, there would have been *no* New Testament and *no* Christian Church had it not been for the Resurrection. The Cross would have remained an obscure and meaningless event apart from the Resurrection, of interest only to the historian.”³

But we must begin with the facts of Jesus’ life in order to understand him as a “saving event.”

I.

Jesus was a historical personality who lived in Palestine about A.D. 30, who was crucified in Judea during the reign of Procurator Pontius Pilate. In the early part of the twentieth century some scholars such as Arthur Drews, James M. Robertson, Albert Kalthoff, Peter Jensen, Paul-Louis Couchod, and William B. Smith wove theories that Jesus never lived: they saw him as an adaptation of the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic on Jewish soil, as the personification of a social movement which was Roman in origin and Jewish in form, as a mythical hero of a sacred Jewish drama in which the father sacrifices a god for the salvation of humanity, or as a synthetic figure in a drama drawn from Oriental mystery religions. Such views today have little place in New Testament scholarship. Rudolf Bultmann expresses one possible starting place

for the historicity of Jesus: "Jesus actually lived as a Jewish rabbi."⁴ This statement may not satisfy every person's Christological feeling regarding Jesus; but it shows the assertion of New Testament scholarship that Jesus was a historical person. The New Testament goes more deeply into the reality of Jesus' physical self: he "was descended from David *according to the flesh*" (Rom. 1:3); "the Word *became flesh* and dwelt among us" (John 1:14); "Jesus Christ has come *in the flesh*" (I John 4:2; II John 1:7); "he was *born of woman*" (Gal. 4:4).

II.

Jesus was a Jew, born into the family of a carpenter, "born under the law" (Gal. 4:5); he had brothers and sisters; he was reared in the religion of Judaism, which focused on the Law and the Prophets. The Gospel of Mark (6:3) affirms: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" [During the fourth century controversies Helvidius (ca. 380) acclaimed these as Jesus' real brothers and sisters; Epiphanius (ca. 382) viewed them as children of Joseph by a former wife, hence step-brothers and step-sisters; while Jerome (Hieronymus, ca. 383) looked upon them as children of Mary Clopas, Mary's sister, and Alphaeus, and thus cous-

ins.] Jesus is called Joseph's son (Luke 4:22; John 1:45, 6:42); the genealogies of Jesus are traced through Joseph back through David to Abraham (Matt. 1:1) and to Adam (Luke 3:38). As related to Jewish thought, Jesus announced that he had not come "to abolish the law and the prophets . . . but to fulfill them" (Matt. 5:17). It is estimated that about 95 per cent of Jesus' ethical teachings are found in the Law and the rabbinical teachings. When asked for the two great commandments, Jesus replied in words of the Jewish Shema: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (a statement from Deut. 6:4, 5); and in thoughts from the "Royal Law" of Judaism, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (found in Lev. 19:18). To trace Jesus' concept of God as illustrated through his parables and his other teachings is to find that God is a holy, merciful, judging, universal, immanent Father who would give his kingdom to the faithful, repentant people—ideas which closely resemble the thoughts of the prophets Amos, Hosea, Micah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Second Isaiah, and Habakkuk. "The God of Jesus is the God of the Jews, pure and simple."⁵ The main thesis of Jesus' preaching, the coming of the kingdom, was the hope of every loyal devotee of Judaism, who in a theocratic society anticipated some time in the future when God

would give his kingdom to his chosen people. Jesus was rooted in Jewish religious thought.

III.

In the New Testament, however, *we have no "photographs" of Jesus* which show mere facts about his life and teachings. Rather, we have "portraits" of him, in which facts about his life and teachings are entwined with beliefs about him, sometimes called the "event" of fact and belief of the early Church (since what a person *believed* about Jesus was as important as what a person *knew* about him.) Seven major New Testament portraits thus emerge, some of them overlapping: those of Mark, Matthew, Luke-Acts, Paul, Hebrews, Revelation, and John. These portraits are not merely about *Jesus*; rather they depict *Jesus Christ*. Each of them attempts to explain the mystery of Jesus, for he was too big and too complex to be captured by one theological mold. Mark views Jesus as adopted at the baptism as the Son of God (Mark 1:9-11) and as one who performs his mighty deeds of healing; and he devotes almost one-half of the contents of his gospel to Jesus going to Jerusalem as a suffering servant—Son of man (8:31-16:8). Matthew portrays Jesus as the Messiah-teacher who is superior to the scribes in his authority (Matt. 7:28), and as one who first of all brings his gospel to "the lost sheep

of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:6). Luke-Acts pictures Jesus as the innovator of a universal gospel, whose life and message was not antagonistic to the Roman government (Luke 23:1-25; 10:1, 29-37; Acts 26:1-32). The Epistle to the Hebrews interprets Jesus as an ideal high priest of the order of Melchizedek (5-10), who offers himself as a perfect sacrifice, whose tabernacle is eternal in the heavens, and whose covenant is made with each man in the shrine of his heart; he discerns that when people belong to such an eternal religious cult, in touch with eternal truths, they should possess faith and not in times of persecution backslide into an easier but imperfect religious cult (11-12). The Gospel of John shows Christ to be the co-existent Word with God, also co-creator with God of all creation, the incarnation of God in the flesh (1:1-14), and that those who believe on Jesus Christ will have eternal life both now and forever (3:16; 20:31). Revelation, written to the churches of Asia Minor, encourages Christians not to deify the Roman emperor during times of persecutions, and thus by their faithfulness to Christ to be worthy of the New Jerusalem on the resurrection day. The letters of Paul, without repeating Jesus' teachings * or relating to many historical events about Jesus, concentrate on a

* The only direct quotation of Jesus' words by Paul is in Acts 20:35: "Remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

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theology concerning the crucified and risen Lord, wherein ample answers are given for the solution of the problems raised by the churches to which Paul feels an intimacy. Central in Paul's letters is the thesis: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (II Cor. 5:19).

ORAL REPORTS OF JESUS

Jesus died about A.D. 30. It is assumed that neither Jesus nor his followers wrote anything about his deeds and teachings during Jesus' earthly ministry, for such was not the custom. Jewish education had a maxim, "To memorize means to learn," and Jewish people in Jesus' time depended upon their memory to retain ideas. Nor were writings transcribed by Jesus' friends immediately after his death: either because of what Jesus had said, or what his followers believed about him, there was the expectancy that before their generation passed away he would return to them (Mark 13:30). This was called the "second coming"; and during this interim between his death and his return they had something more valuable than written documents: namely, "living letters" (II Cor. 3:2, 3) in apostles like Paul, Peter, Titus, and Barnabas. Furthermore many of Jesus' teachings about the kingdom of God, the nature of God, and the ethics by which men should live together were familiar to many of his Jewish followers, schooled in the Law and the Prophets.

Hence there was little need of written documents. However, as Jesus' return was prolonged, some of the "living letters" or apostles were taken by death, and traditions were confused; the writing of records and interpretations about Jesus was necessitated. The date for the interest in major written documents about Jesus is ca. A.D. 50, when Paul's first letters (Galatians and I and II Thessalonians) were written, and the *Logia*, a collection of Jesus' sayings, was compiled by Matthew (according to Papias as recorded in Eusebius, *Church History*, III. 39).

During this oral period, A.D. 30-50, miscellaneous Aramaic fragments were possibly written, and two main streams of oral tradition transmitted cardinal ideas about Jesus: *form stories* and *the early apostolic preaching*.

I.

Form stories were related to Jesus' healings, his controversies with his opponents, his parables, epiphany stories about Jesus as the Saviour, and miscellaneous sayings of Jesus which were used in preaching and teaching. These form stories were employed to guide and to instruct the early Christians in their daily living and worship. The epiphany stories were related to Jesus' resurrection, as well as to his birth, baptism, and transfiguration.

II.

The early apostolic preaching, which is found in the early sermons of Peter, Paul, Stephen, and other apostles (Acts 2:14-36; 3:12-26; 7:2-53; 17:22-31; et al.), centered around these ideas: (a) "The prophecies are fulfilled, and the New Age is inaugurated by the coming of Christ. (b) He was born of the seed of David. (c) He died according to the Scriptures, to deliver us out of the present evil age. (d) He was buried. (e) He rose on the third day according to the Scriptures. (f) He is exalted at the right hand of God, as Son of God and Lord of the quick and dead. (g) He will come again as Judge and Saviour of men."⁶ In this early *kerygma* (preaching) the centrality of the resurrection is observed, which is the fulfillment of scriptures. "By virtue of the resurrection Jesus had been exalted at the right hand of God, as Messianic head of the new Israel. . . . The Holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Christ's present power and glory. . . . The Messianic Age will shortly reach its consummation in the return of Christ."⁷ At the heart of the early apostolic preaching was the significance of the resurrection of Jesus. Yet antecedent to the resurrection event was a life whose import could not be quelled by the crucifixion horror; but if the crucifixion had not been "answered" by the resurrection of Jesus, his influence within the early Church would have remained

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but a memory of a crucified martyr, not that of an exalted Lord who transmitted a stimulus of power and hope, and what Jesus once said and did would have been remembered about merely a good Jewish teacher and martyr. The framework of the early apostolic message, centered in the resurrection, played a tremendous role in carrying forth the continuing power of Jesus Christ and his gospel.

THE RESURRECTION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
AND APOCRYPHAL WRITINGS

While the *belief* in the resurrection weaves itself as the central event throughout the New Testament, there are explicit places where the resurrection *appearances* are given. They are as follows:

Those described by Paul in I Corinthians 15:5-8: to Cephas (Peter), the twelve, the five hundred (many still alive), James, all the apostles, and Paul.

In the narrative in Mark 16:1-8, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome enter the tomb and flee with fear, with the inference given that Jesus will appear in Galilee (16:7). In Mark 16:9-20 are: the account of the resurrection which has been predicted five times earlier in the gospel; the appearance to Peter inferred in Mark 16:7 (also mentioned in I Cor. 15:5); the appearance in Galilee to Mary

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Magdalene and "those who had been with him," to two others, to the eleven.*

The appearances in Matthew 28:1-20 are: to the women at the sepulchre; to the eleven apostles in Galilee. It is plausible, since Matthew has depended so closely on Mark for narrative materials, that the resurrection events in Matthew represent what the materials in the lost ending of Mark following Mark 16:8 originally contained.

The appearances in Luke 24:1-35 are: to the two disciples, one called Clopas, on the road to Emmaus (24:13); to Peter (24:34); to the eleven (24:33), all the appearances taking place in Jerusalem and its vicinity.

The appearances in chapter 20 of the Gospel of John, mainly in Jerusalem, are: to Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre (20:11f.); to the ten apostles (Thomas not present) behind closed doors, this event showing the resurrection, the ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurring on the same day (20:24-26); to the eleven (with Thomas present), the event occurring eight days after the first resurrection experi-

* The longer ending in Mark (16:9-20) depicting the appearance to Mary Magdalene, to "two of them," and "to the eleven" is possibly of an Alexandrian origin, coming from an apocryphal writing in the second century. The outstanding fourth-century codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, as well as the old Syriac, Greek, Egyptian, and Latin manuscripts, omit it. An ancient Armenian manuscript views Ariston as the author of these added verses in Mark 16:9-20 (see Eusebius, *Church History*, III. 39).

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ences (20:26f.). In chapter 21 there are appearances: to the disciples (among them Peter, James, John, Thomas, and Nathanael) while they are fishing on the Sea of Galilee; at the threefold commission to Peter (John 21:15-17).

The remaining resurrection appearances are: to Stephen at his martyrdom (Acts 7:55); to Paul on the Damascus road (Acts 9:3-18, 22:1-11; 26:2-18; referred to in I Cor. 15:8, this event occurring ca. A.D. 35, and synonymous with Paul's baptismal and conversion experiences; to John the Seer on the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:9-19).

The Gospel of Mark (ending at 16:8) relates the empty tomb experience but describes no appearances. Some scholars feel that Mark in his dramatic fashion wished to end his gospel abruptly at 16:8 so as to leave the sense of awe regarding the resurrection for his readers. Ned B. Stonehouse states this view: "If the incarnation of the Son of God, stupendous as that fact must have been in Mark's thought, is not described nor placed in an historical setting but merely intimated, may not the awe-impelling event of the resurrection likewise be set forth indirectly and abruptly?"⁸ John Knox shares the view of Ned B. Stonehouse: "I do not share the suspicion, which goes back to ancient times, that Mark did not originally end with 16:8."⁹

Such a list is undoubtedly fragmentary, but one

which shows how at different intervals in different places the awareness of the resurrection was remembered as basic.

The central account of the meaning of the resurrection comes from the words of the Apostle Paul as he writes to the Corinthian Church regarding two questions: (1) What was the nature of the resurrection of Christ? (2) What kind of resurrection will each of us as Christians share? Paul in his reply (I Cor. 15) answers these questions together, for they are interrelated. Paul adds authority to the *reality* of the resurrection by listing those to whom Christ appeared, Peter being the first and Paul, "born out of due time," being the last in his schedule of names. If Paul's conversion, which is also his baptismal experience (Rom. 6:2-4) as well as his resurrection experience, is dated ca. A.D. 35, it is assumed that Paul's list of those who shared the resurrection of Jesus is only partial, and obviously it is queer that no names of women appear in his list. "The twelve" to which Paul refers does not necessarily include nor exclude Matthias, but is probably a conventional number which refers to Jesus' immediate and close followers. The five hundred to which Paul refers is not clear, though it might refer to the early converts at Jerusalem, either to the one hundred and twenty in the upper room (Acts 1:13-15), to the three thousand who received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:

41), or to the list of disciples (Mark 16:7). "To all the apostles" indicates all Christian leaders whose leadership had been given authority by awareness of Christ's resurrection.

Noticeable in Paul's answer to the Corinthians is his absence of mention of the empty grave and the witnesses at the grave in any historical locality. Central in his reply to the resurrection bodies of the Corinthians are his words: "Flesh and blood (*sarx* and *haima*) cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (I Cor. 15:50). Paul believed in a *bodily* resurrection, but not in a physical resurrection. As birds of the air, fish of the sea, and land creatures have the kinds of bodies needed for their present experiences (terrestrial bodies), Paul believed that Christians would have the kinds of bodies needed for the resurrected life: spiritual or glorified bodies. (For Paul's concept of man see Chapter 4, under "The Resurrection of the Body.") It is inferred from Paul's thinking about man's resurrection that Paul believed that the resurrection of Jesus was not that of a physical body (*sarx*) but of a glorified or spiritual body (*soma*). Paul, however, does not explore this problem, so we do not definitely know his conclusions. Kirsopp Lake makes this inference: "The view that St. Paul means that all appearances of the risen Lord were of the same immaterial kind as that to himself does not rest

merely on the fact that he draws no distinctions between them. The whole of his argument in I Corinthians 15, to the effect that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven, is based on the parallelism between the Resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of Christians.”¹⁰

Paul's view that man's body “transubstantiates” from a “terrestrial” body to a “celestial” body is rooted in Jewish thought, finding its expression in the Apocalypse of Baruch and in the Book of Enoch. Since Paul was a Pharisee and the Apocalypse of Baruch was written by Pharisees in the first century of the Christian Era, it is likely that Paul and Baruch shared similar Pharisaic ideas regarding the resurrection body in its changed, glorified nature. (See Chapter 2, under “Hebrew Thought About Life After Death,” for details of the view in the Apocalypse of Baruch.)

If Paul was influenced in his concepts about the transubstantiation of the body by the Apocalypse of Baruch, he made a slight departure in his thinking: Baruch implies that man will be recognized *shortly after* his death by his physical resurrection before the transubstantiation takes place; while Paul sees in I Corinthians an *immediate* transubstantiation from the terrestrial to the celestial body. However, in I Thessalonians (4:14-17) Paul infers that Christians will rest in Sheol until the resurrection day: “For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even

so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord." The words of Paul to the Thessalonians regarding the resurrection represent Paul's earlier thinking, while his letters to the Corinthians come from the more mature Paul. After his three-year ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10; 20:31),* he speaks of the immediate transubstantiation of the Christian body at death from its terrestrial state into its celestial nature (I Cor. 15:42-55).

An excellent summary of Paul's view of the resurrection is the following:

An examination, therefore, of the evidence of St. Paul leads to the result that he believed the risen Lord to have appeared to himself and to other disciples in a manner which left no room for doubt as to his triumph over death. He thought that the body of the

* See Chapter 4, under "Eschatology and the Resurrection," concerning an Ephesian School of Thought.

risen Lord no longer consisted of flesh and blood, but that a transubstantiation into spirit had taken place. This transubstantiation he believed to have taken place on the third day, and this belief was either based on a deduction from the Old Testament, or on some fact which he does not adduce as evidence of the Resurrection, and nowhere defines in his epistles. It is probable that he believed the first appearance of the risen Lord to have been to St. Peter, but there is no evidence to show where it took place. It is almost certain that he derived some part of his teaching as to the appearances of the risen Lord from the early traditions which obtained, probably in Jerusalem, when he became a Christian, but it is impossible to define exactly the limits of his use of this tradition.¹¹

As a person moves from the New Testament into the apocryphal writings of the New Testament he finds further emphases upon certain aspects of the resurrection: In the Gospel According to the Hebrews there is the appearance of Jesus to James, after Jesus had given the linen cloth to the servant of the priest, James having sworn that he would not eat bread until he should see Jesus rise from the dead. Jesus appears to James and says, "My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of Man is risen from among them that sleep. In the Acts of Paul the stress is on Jesus' coming to redeem all flesh by his flesh, the dead being raised in the flesh as Jesus himself was resurrected in the flesh. For those who say that there is no resurrec-

tion of the flesh, those persons will have no resurrection unto life, but unto judgment. In the Epistle of the Apostles, Jesus says to Mary, Peter, and Mary's sisters, "Wherefore doubt ye still, and are unbelieving? I am he that spake unto you of my flesh and my death and my resurrection." He then asks Peter to put his fingers into the print of the nails in his hands as Thomas, and Thomas to see how his feet make impress on the earth. Upon touching him these friends of Jesus learn of the truth that he was risen in the flesh. The Apocalypse of Peter teaches that all flesh shall be restored, since "nothing perisheth before God and nothing is impossible with him, because all things are his."

The emerging story of Jesus in the New Testament and the apocryphal writings of the New Testament from his birth and through his earthly life to his death and his resurrection shows the close correlation of the *facts* about his life and teaching related to *beliefs* about him. At times it is difficult to discern where facts about Jesus end and beliefs of the Christian Church enter in, and we do not have the tools of scholarship to separate one from the other; nor is it necessary. The reaction of the early Church to Jesus' life, teachings, death, and resurrection is as important as the historical facts in themselves; and all compose the "event" of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. One aspect of the whole event, however, is of basic im-

portance: the fact of Jesus' resurrection and the attempts to interpret the *mode and meaning* of the resurrection of Jesus. While Jesus' life, teachings, miracles, death, and resurrection compose the entire "saving event" as related to him, it is Jesus' resurrection which places the "halo" about his total role of a saviour; for without the resurrection the other events might have been forgotten, and the story of Jesus would have remained in the annals of literature as merely the tragic story of a Jewish prophet or a good rabbi.

FOUR

THE RESURRECTION

AND RELATED

THEOLOGICAL EVENTS

INSTEAD of speaking about a New Testament *theology*, it is better to recognize New Testament *theologies* (though some of them overlap): especially those of Mark, Matthew, Luke-Acts, Paul, Hebrews, John, and Revelation. "If we could distinguish them all, there might turn out to be eighteen or twenty different theologies reflected in the New Testament, theologies implicit or incipient, as various writers undertook to set forth the common faith in terms of their own understanding and interpretation of it."¹ Yet in all these theologies is felt the common note that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (II Cor. 5:19); and weaving itself deeply into every writing and thus giving unity to the New Testament is the fact of Jesus' resurrection.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

While Augustine has often been credited as being the "father" of modern psychology, the title really belongs

to the Apostle Paul. Paul himself was influenced by both the Old Testament and the Greek concepts of man, and out of these two influences filtered by his own thoughts have come the real bases for Christian thought about human nature. Paul is *the* New Testament theologian-psychologist, and from his ideas about the complexity of human nature we derive basic concepts related to the resurrection of man and the resurrection of Jesus. Central in Paul's thinking is that of "the resurrection of the body," which offers a clue to the appreciation of several problems related to the resurrection of man and of Jesus.

Paul uses four terms to denote his concept of man: *sarx*, *psyche*, *pneuma*, *soma*. *Sarx* indicates the flesh of man (similar to *basar* in the Old Testament); it is the physical framework for the earthly expression of man's total personality (*soma*), almost identical with man's physical body (Rom. 7:5; 8:10). Unlike the Gnostics, who looked upon the flesh of man as inherently sinful because of its creation by an imperfect Demiurge, Paul sees the flesh (*sarx*) as not sinful but weak, and thus the "occasion" or "opportunity" for sin (Gal. 5:13), since in the flesh sin finds an easy target for its wrongs; but the real center of man's sinfulness lies in his will, not in his flesh. The "desires of the flesh," which result in sin, or works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21), are in constant opposition to "the desires of the Spirit," which bring forth the "fruits of the Spirit"

(Gal. 5:16-25). *Psyche* is the life principle which animates all creatures. Body (*soma*) in comparison to flesh (*sarx*) is the tangible manifestation of a personality. Here on earth it is represented in man's terrestrial framework (*sarx*), while in man's continuation beyond the grave the body (*soma*) continues in the resurrection experience, apart from the flesh; flesh and blood (*sarx* and *haima*) will not inherit the kingdom of God on the resurrection day (I Cor. 15:50), since "the perishable (*sarx*) does not inherit the imperishable (*soma*)." Hence Paul does not believe in the resurrection of the flesh (*sarx*), though he does believe in the resurrection of the body (*soma*). Paul holds to a bodily resurrection as opposed to the Greek concept of immortality of spirit or the Pharisaic view of man's physical body joining the soul on the resurrection day. "The *soma*, or body, is the whole psycho-physical unity, made up of *sarx* and *psyche*, which constitutes man as distinguished from God. It is the nearest word in Greek for 'personality,' for which none of the ancients had a term. . . . *Soma* is the whole man constituted as he is by the network of physical and mental relationships in which he is bound up with the continuum of other persons and things. . . . The body is the symbol which binds every individual, divinely unique as he is, in inescapable relatedness with the whole of nature and history and the totality of the cosmic order." ²

Psyche and *pneuma* thus deal with the life principles of the individual, the former with his human vitality and the latter with his divine stimulus. *Psyche* is the life principle which animates all types of animal life, whether man, bird, fish, or beast. Both the natural and the spiritual person, the sinner and the saint, possess *psyche*. While *pneuma* relates man to God, since God is *pneuma* (Spirit), Paul and Jewish thinkers generally felt that *psyche* did little to relate man to God, though in God's creation *psyche* was part of God's gift of life to man. *Pneuma* by comparison is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and in so far as men have right relationship to God or Christ they share *pneuma*. Man in his *sarx* (flesh), controlled only by *psyche* (the life principle), finds himself doing what he ought not to do, and not doing the things he ought to do; but when man finds his psychic self dominated by or related to the *pneuma* of God he finds that "the spirit (*pneuma*) helps us in our weakness . . . the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. . . . All who are led by the Spirit (*pneuma*) of God are sons of God (Rom. 7:19, 20; 8:26, 27, 14).

Paul shared the Hebrew view that man was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), created but a little lower than God himself (Ps. 8:5-8). Had man not tried to live by his own wisdom, had he continued to live by the *pneuma* of God, he would have lived

eternally (Gen. 3); for "God made man for immortality" (Wisd. Sol. 2:23). For Paul it seemed that all creation was affected by Adam's sin (Rom. 8:19-23), and with the sin of Adam death for man came into the world (Rom. 5:12). Man thus from the time of Adam to the time of Christ was animated by only the *psyche* principle, having through the sin of Adam lost his relation to the *pneuma* of God. In man's state of estrangement from God's *pneuma*, neither the Law of Judaism nor the philosophic wisdom of the Greeks (I Cor. 1:21) was able to bridge the gap between sinful man and the *pneuma* of God. God, however, was in Christ reconciling the world to himself (II Cor. 5:19), and those who by faith in Christ found right relationship to the *pneuma* of the resurrected Christ found simultaneously their right relationship to the *pneuma* of God, since the Spirit of God and the Spirit of the risen and exalted Christ are equivalent (Rom. 8:3-11; II Cor. 3:17). Hence by faith the Christian man finds his earthly body (*soma*) animated by the Spirit (*pneuma*) of God, by which he manifests the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23-25; Eph. 5:9). The fruit of the Spirit is further shown by man's expression through speaking with tongues, prophecy, teaching, apostleship, performing of miracles (I Cor. 12:4-28; Rom. 12:4-8), though the highest expression of the *pneuma* of God (or of Christ) is shown by the way man lives redemptive love (*agape*) (I Cor. 13; Rom.

12:9-21). The Church as the "body of Christ" or body of believers is the organism, or eschatological community, where the Spirit (*pneuma*) manifests itself among members of the Christian fellowship (I Cor. 12:4-31; Rom. 12:1-8; Eph. 4:11-16). Hence the physical psychic body of man (*sarx*) as the instrument by which the natural man expresses himself in the present world is replaced by the Christian who puts on the "body of Christ" with its animation of *pneuma*. This new life in the Spirit does not emancipate man from the world of nature or from the scene of history, but redeems him into a new commonwealth or fellowship wherein the believer's body (*soma*) is changed into a glorious body (*soma*) like that of Christ (Phil. 3:21).

Christ's resurrection thus has left a way of redemption for his followers *now to share*, as they through faith and as members of the Church find their relation to the *pneuma* of God (and of the resurrected Christ). It is through the *pneuma* of God and its association with the resurrected Christ that man has faith in his own resurrection (I Cor. 15:12-22), for "as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:22). "Each individual, when and as he comes into Christ, begins to put on the new man. The resurrection of the body begins, not at death, but at baptism (*cf.* I Cor. 15:29). What happens at death does not concern the new body, but the old." ³

THE EMPTY TOMB

Around the event of the empty tomb Christian theologies have taken their points of departure. One type of theologian sees the empty tomb as the cardinal *fact* to prove Jesus' resurrection. "Had there been no empty tomb," he says, "what proof would we have for Jesus' resurrection?" Such a question was undoubtedly asked by some in the first century, and the developing tradition about the empty tomb supplied an answer to that query. Another type of theologian views the tradition regarding the empty tomb as an *apology* to satisfy the traditional view regarding the *fact* and the *proof* of Jesus' resurrection. From the writings of Paul down to those of the Gospel of John and the Gospel of Peter the growth of the tradition about the empty tomb can be discerned. "The apologetic importance of the emptiness of the tomb was realized only gradually, as the faith of the Church came to be questioned," writes B. D. Yarnold.⁴ The historian describes the facts about the tradition around the empty tomb; the religious philosopher then asks, "Are these facts historically true, or are they the result of Christian apology?" Both the historian and the student of religion are needed in approaching the problem of the empty tomb.

The Apostle Paul, giving us our first report about the resurrection (I Cor. 15, ca. A.D. 57), says nothing

about the empty grave, though some infer from his statement regarding Christ arising on the third day that he held to the empty grave theory. Yet, if Paul knew of the empty tomb, why should he have omitted such an important fact? Paul's faith in the resurrection, however, is apparently based upon the evidence that the Lord had been "seen," not that the tomb was vacant. Paul proclaimed the *fact* of Jesus' resurrection, but not the *accompanying circumstances*. In the Acts of the Apostles (2:24f; 4:6, 33; 5:30f.; 7:56; 10:39f.) Peter and the other apostles do not appeal to the empty tomb, but to the Scriptures and Christ's appearances to witnesses as proofs of the resurrection of Jesus. Whether these first apostles knew about the traditions of the empty grave, or whether they felt them secondary to their awareness of their risen Lord, the historian cannot say, for he has no facts to verify his answer.

The Four Gospels portray a developing tradition about the empty tomb: Mark 16:1-8 (written ca. A.D. 68) describes the stone at the tomb rolled back, with a young man sitting on the right side of the tomb who says to the two Marys and Salome, "He has risen; he is not here; see the place where they laid him." Whether the young man means to indicate the empty tomb to which the women have come or another nearby tomb where Jesus had been buried, is not clear in this gospel report. As the tradition weaves

itself into Luke 24:1-12 (written A.D. 80-90) the two Marys, Joanna, and the other women, upon going to the grave with spices, find the stone rolled away from the tomb; and going into the tomb and finding it empty, they run to tell the eleven and all the rest. Though the Gospel of Mark (ending at 16:8) tells about the empty tomb, it describes no resurrection appearances. Matthew 28:1-15 (written A.D. 80-90) tells of the two Marys going to the tomb, of the earthquake, and about the angel of the Lord coming from heaven to roll back the stone, sitting upon it, and announcing to the women, "He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come see the place where he lay." This is followed by the angel's telling them that the Lord will go before them into Galilee. Matthew's empty grave event is augmented by the Roman guards at the tomb being bribed by the chief priests and elders to say that Jesus' disciples stole his body by night. The Gospel of Matthew heightens the supernatural and gives a reply to the Jewish heresy that Jesus' body had been stolen by mentioning the Roman guard by the sealed tomb (27:62-66).

In John 20:1-18 (written ca. A.D. 100) Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb while it is still dark, and seeing the stone rolled away runs to Peter and the beloved Disciple with these words, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Thereupon Peter and the be-

loved Disciple run to the empty tomb and see "the linen cloths lying there, and the napkin which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself." From the evidence of the empty tomb the beloved Disciple "saw and believed." Mary, weeping outside the tomb, says to two angels, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Whereupon a person, who at first she thought was a gardener, spoke to her, and she recognized him then as the risen Lord. She then tells the brethren, "I have seen the Lord."

The Gospel of Peter, an apocryphal gospel written ca. A.D. 150, shows how the apologetic tradition concerning the empty tomb took on further data and lore: At the request of the scribes, Pharisees, and elders, Pilate requests Petronius and a group of soldiers to guard the tomb where Jesus is buried, soldiers two by two keeping guard at every watch. The soldiers "on the Lord's day" see the stone rolled away by itself, *two* young men descended from heaven entered the tomb, and from it *three* men exit, "two of them sustaining the other, and the cross following after them." Mary Magdalene and "the women her friends" come to the tomb, which is open, and hear the words from a young man, "He is risen and is departed; but if ye believe it not, look in and see the place where he lay, that he is not here; for he is risen and is departed thither whence he was sent."

These are the terse facts which describe the developing tradition about the empty tomb. How then does the philosopher of religion interpret them? His first chore is to ask, "Are these facts historical?" His second query goes hand in hand with the first: "What do these facts mean?" Clarence T. Craig has succinctly stated the correlative task of the historian and the student of religion in dealing with the resurrection: "The problem of the historian is to reconstruct the movements of the disciples between the time of their ignominious flight and their open preaching in Jerusalem. The problem of the student of religion is to consider the nature of the experiences of the disciples and the value of the spiritual event. The two questions must not be confused; the first is exclusively in the realm of fact, but the other must essentially rest back upon religious faith."⁵ In dealing with the empty grave as part of the resurrection event, Craig's words need to be heeded.

One common theme about the resurrection weaves itself throughout the New Testament: *The early Christians believed in the resurrection of Jesus, because they found a living presence in their lives; they did not create their faith in the resurrection of Jesus because they could not find his body.* The gap between Jesus' burial and his resurrection appearances to his friends is one without intervening facts to tell just what happened. Except for the apocryphal story

of the two men carrying Jesus out of the tomb (in the Gospel of Peter), and a fragment (from the Gospel according to the Hebrews, preserved by Jerome) which tells of Jesus giving back the shroud to the high priest as Jesus leaves the tomb, no data describes *how* or *when* or *if* Jesus was removed from the tomb.

Two factors make the interpretation of the resurrection difficult: (1) Many people are sure only of sense-facts, and hence must possess sense-data for their proof of Jesus' resurrection. "Seeing is believing" is their criterion for truth, and unless there is an empty tomb there seems to be no evidence that Jesus was resurrected. People who demanded such a proof for truth lived in the first century; they are still with us today. (2) Orthodox Judaism in the first century, out of which many Christians emerged, held to a physical bodily resurrection. Hence if one like Jesus was resurrected, by Orthodox implication his physical body shared the resurrection; and thus the necessity of the empty tomb, if Jesus' resurrection is true. If Christian orthodoxy, born out of Orthodox Judaism regarding the event of a resurrection, were to be satisfied, "a link had to be forged between the stories of the burial of Jesus and the discovery of the empty tomb."⁶ The growing description of this tradition results in the stories of the empty grave, the witnesses at the grave, and the import of their experiences there. Maurice Goguel seems right when he says: "At first the affirma-

tion that the tomb was empty was made *a priori*. It was a corollary deduced from the affirmation that Christ was alive in heaven. Once we assume what was the Semitic belief about man, it follows that if Jesus was alive in heaven, his body could not possibly have been left to decompose in the tomb. There was then no necessity to go and look in the tomb in order to declare that it was no longer there.”⁷

The empty tomb and its worth for proving the resurrection of Jesus must be fought on doctrinal rather than on historical grounds, since we do not have sufficient historical data to substantiate the circumstances of the empty tomb. The fact of Jesus' resurrection is testified in the New Testament, but the mode of the resurrection is not clearly told. To say that Jesus' physical body was taken from the tomb and resuscitated gives no clue to *how* and *when* they later disposed of his physical body. To say that Jesus' physical body was *transmuted* into a spiritual body leaves one with further queries about the empty grave and the body that was there. The empty grave and the mode of Jesus' resurrection must remain a mystery, but the fact of Jesus' resurrection remains a *fact*. Regarding Jesus' words on the cross, “It is finished,” Goguel says: “The faith which he [Jesus] had been able to plant in the hearts of a few men, feeble and hesitating as it was, had roots which were too deep to be ever eradicated. Nothing was finished. In reality

everything had just begun. The faith in the Resurrection was about to be born, and with it that Christianity which was destined to conquer the Ancient World, and to march through the centuries.”⁸ Likewise writes W. J. Sparrow Simpson, “While the emptiness of the grave is shown by accumulative evidence to be one of the primitive facts in the Resurrection-story, it is equally certain that this was not the cause of the disciples’ faith. . . . The Easter faith did not really spring from the empty grave, but from the self-manifestation of the risen Lord.”⁹

THE THIRD DAY

With the story of the empty tomb several further problems are raised: Why were there *three* days between Jesus’ death and his resurrection? Where was Jesus’ spirit during these *three* days between his death and his resurrection? Why were there *forty* days before his ascension? These questions give rise to two doctrines of the Christian Church, that of the descent into Sheol and that of the ascension.

The reference to Jesus’ resurrection occurring “on the third day” indicates the belief in the early Church that that event took place on a definite date. “The third day,” according to Canon Sanday, “is hardly less firmly rooted in the tradition of the Church than the resurrection itself. It is strange that so slight a detail

should have been preserved at all, and still stranger that it should hold the place it does in the standard of the Church's faith. We must needs regard it as original." ¹⁰

Paul is the first in our Christian writings to make reference to the resurrection as happening "on the third day" and "in accordance with the Scriptures" (I Cor. 15:4). If the Scriptures gave to Paul a proof text for Jesus' resurrection on the third day, he may have obtained such from Jonah in the belly of the fish three days and nights (Jonah 1:47), also found in Jesus' reference to himself as the Son of man being in the heart of the earth three days and nights (Matt. 12:40). Jesus makes other references to his being resurrected on the third day (Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:34, 14:58), and from further teachings of Jesus inferences can be made that Jesus looked for his resurrection to eventuate "on the third day" (Matt. 26:61, 27:40; Mark 14:58, 15:29; John 2:19, 20). According to a rabbinical tradition ¹¹ (first in written form in the third century A.D.), the soul remains in the grave for three days before it reunites with the body. "A state of death beyond the third day meant, from the popular Jewish point of view, an absolute dissolution of life. At this time the face cannot be recognized with certainty; the body bursts; and the soul, which until then had hovered over the body, parts from it." ¹²

"The third day" was apparently a part of the early

church doctrine concerning Jesus' resurrection from the grave, and also an essential part of the early apostolic preaching (Acts 6:40, 27:19; I Cor. 15:4); therefore, it is a statement which must be seriously met. In view of the fact that Jesus himself makes several references to his own resurrection "on the third day" (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; 14:58), the situation must be encountered with a further question: Do Jesus' references to his own resurrection on the third day come from Jesus' wisdom about his own future death and resurrection, perhaps stimulated by the story from Jonah (1:17), or do these references come from the faith of the early Church? Whatever conclusion a person makes, he still remembers that without Jesus' life, teachings, death, and resurrection there would have been no reference to the third day. Some seeing Jesus as Jesus *Christ* feel that God gave him a special anticipation and faith about his own future, and that Jesus believed he would be raised from the dead on the third day. Others, in the light of a gospel containing both facts and interpretation of those facts, see Jesus' view of his resurrection on the third day as the transference of the credo of the early Church to Jesus' own lips. This latter view seems more in accordance with the best of recent New Testament studies.

Some scholars view the resurrection on the third day as coming from the sun-god myths of the mystery

religions, where Attis, Adonis, and Osiris had their resurrections, symbolized by the victory of the sun in spring over winter. They see the same pattern in Christianity: the day of the sun god becomes the Christian Lord's Day, with Easter Sunday corresponding to the sun's emerging from the night of winter. Hence some would discern the death of Jesus followed by his resurrection "on the third day" as coming from pagan mythology rather than from the suggestion of Old Testament scriptures. However, the analogy between the resurrection of Jesus on the third day and that of the mystery cult has wide divergencies. "There is no true analogy between the story of Christ's death and resurrection on the third day and the pagan myths of slain and risen gods, beyond the general ideas of death and survival. These myths were polytheistic in origin, and were a poetic rendering of the phenomena of the yearly death and revival of vegetation represented in ritual and personified. The death and resurrection of Christ, on the other hand, were historical facts which bore no relation whatever to these myths."¹³ Whether the resurrection of Jesus with its stress on "the third day" is influenced by Jewish or pagan suggestions, or was an actual time sequence, is secondary to the fact that Jesus' resurrection was the *event* which changed the course of history and continued into the life of the early Christians, creating both the Church and the writings of

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the New Testament. For some basic reasons "the third day" related to Jesus' resurrection wove itself firmly into the early apostolic preaching.

THE LORD'S DAY

There is a lack of clarity around the origin of Sunday and its becoming the Lord's Day, and regarding the direct association of the Lord's Day with the resurrection of Jesus. The Apostle Paul in writing to the Corinthians (I Cor. 16:2) asks the Christians to care for the collection as they come together "on the first day of the week." Acts (20:7) refers to the disciples coming to break bread "on the first day of the week." In celebrating the Lord's Supper as commemorating Jesus' death, the early Church saw it as one of thanksgiving, not of sorrow, because of the resurrection. Ignatius in his Letter to the Smyrnaeans (7:1; ca. 110) says of the pagans, "They keep away from thanksgiving and prayer, because they do not admit that the Thanksgiving (Eucharist) is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father raised up." Such references indicate that Christians are celebrating their worship service "on the first day of the week" (Sunday) rather than on the Jewish sabbath, the last day of the week. Worship on the first day of the week was associated with Jesus' resurrection on that day. Though the basis for the

resurrection occurring on Sunday is not always clear in the various gospel traditions, the Four Gospels agree that Jesus was crucified on the day before the Jewish sabbath, and the common tradition arose that he was resurrected "on the third day." Matthew (27:52, 53) has the crucifixion and the resurrection occurring on the same day; the same sequence of events is reflected in the Gospel of Peter (3:19). In the Gospel of John Jesus arises on the day after the sabbath (20:1, 19) and appears to his disciples after another week on Sunday (20:26), which infers that Sunday was the probable day of the resurrection when the Gospel of John was written (ca. A.D. 100). The Gospel of Mark (written ca. A.D. 68) also shows evidence that Sunday had assumed importance in the western churches, where the Gospel of Mark written to Rome had authority, the Passover celebration starting on Nisan 14 and being completed on the following Sunday. Clearly Mark says (16:1, 2) that "when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early *on the first day* of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen." In the Didache (14) and the letter of Pliny (Epistles X.96) further data enforce the view that Sunday had become the day of special worship for the Christians.

Sunday emerged as the day of worship for Chris-

tians because Jesus' resurrection occurred on that day, though the sabbath was also observed by many Christians (especially those who had come out of Judaism) as a holy day with special observances. The writings of the Apostle Paul (Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:16), of Barnabas (Epistle of Barnabas 5:8-9),* of Ignatius (Epistle to the Magnesians IX.1), and of the Apostolic Constitutions (third century A.D.) continue to put forth regulations for the Sabbath.

Sunday as the "Lord's Day" for the Christians is first mentioned in the New Testament in Revelation 1:10 (ca. A.D. 95), where John the Seer on the Isle of Patmos finds himself "in the Spirit *on the Lord's Day*." Pliny (Epistles X.90) in writing to the Emperor Trajan (98-117) speaks about the people (the Christians) who sing hymns to Christ as God, and who meet together early on a "fixed day." Ignatius (ca. A.D. 112, Epistle to the Magnesians 9.1) tells the Magnesians to lead a life conformable to "the Lord's Day," and emphasizes the first day of the week as sacred to the followers of Jesus Christ, since on this sacred day "our life sprang up through him and his death." Justin Martyr in his *Apology* (1.67, ca. 150) speaks about the Christians who meet on a day called Sunday, where the president preaches, common

* "Wherefore also we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, on which Jesus also rose from the dead, and, having been manifested, ascended into the heavens."

prayers are repeated, the writings of the prophets and the apostles are read, the president blesses the bread and wine which are participated in by those present and taken out to those absent. All such observances point to Sunday as the Lord's Day. John Chrysostom calls Sunday *die panis*, "the day of Bread." In The Didache (ch. 14; ca. 150) and the writings of Ignatius (Epistle to the Magnesians 9.1) Christians are referred to as "those who no longer 'sabbatize,' but live according to the Lord's Day." The Epistle of Barnabas (15:9; ca. 130) refers to Sunday as the day of worship: "This is why we [those no longer keeping the sabbath but observing the Lord's Day] also observe the eighth day with rejoicing, on which Jesus also rose from the dead and having shown himself ascended into heaven." In 321 Constantine set aside Sunday as the official day of rest and worship. Though the Apostle Paul saw the sabbath as "the shadow of things to come" (Rom. 14:5f., Col. 2:16f., Gal 4:9-11), and the sabbath diminished as a day of worship along with Sunday for Jewish Christians after the destruction of the Temple (A.D. 70), the name Sabbath became a synonym for Sunday in Christian vocabulary for the Puritans. The Westminster Confession in 1647 popularized the two days as the same day of worship for Christians.

Thus the fact of Jesus' resurrection occurring on Sunday gave rise to the first day of the week as the

Christian holy day, which for a few years was celebrated by Jewish Christians along with the sabbath as holy days, but later became the Lord's Day, with both Sunday and the Sabbath subsequently becoming names used to describe "the Lord's Day." "The transference of religious devotion from the Sabbath to the Lord's Day is surely one of the most striking witnesses to the period within which the Resurrection occurred."¹⁴ And the initial cause of this transference is the fact of Jesus' resurrection.

ESCHATOLOGY AND THE RESURRECTION

Jesus as the first fruits of the resurrection is both the proof and the hope of individual Christians sharing in the resurrection. Whether the sharing of Christ's resurrection is a present existential experience, one that occurs immediately after an individual's death, or one that all must wait for until the general resurrection day is a question seen in different ways by various writers of the New Testament. Each view relates itself to the problem of eschatology, which deals with the ideal quality of the ideal age, whether such a moment be the "now" of the present or the rewards which come at the end of history, the former finding itself in the realm of "realized eschatology," and the latter within the framework of "consistent eschatology." Albert Schweitzer views man's hope in the res-

urrection as a future event, while Rudolf Bultmann and C. H. Dodd view the resurrection as a present experience. It is, however, both, for the individual Christian in his relation to Christ has already begun to taste of the fruits of the resurrection, though the consummation of the resurrection day lies in that future event beyond the grave. Oscar Cullmann writes, "If Christ is the 'first-born from the dead,' then this means that the End-time is already present. But it also means that a temporal interval separates the First-born from all other men who are not yet 'born from the dead.' This means then that we live in the interim time, between Jesus' Resurrection, which has already taken place, and our own, which will not take place until the End. It also means, moreover, that the quickening Power, the Holy Spirit, is already at work among us. . . . There is then a foretaste of the resurrection."¹⁵

Oscar Cullmann's description of the "interim condition" of the dead is as follows: The dead in Christ in this "interim" find Easter the great turning point in their lives (Matt. 27:52), because for them death has lost its "sting," and for them it no longer has any significance. As members of the Church (Christ's community) are animated by the power of the resurrection, the Holy Spirit, so are also they who have died in Christ in possession of the Holy Spirit; in fact "a man who lacks the fleshy body is yet nearer

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Christ than before, if he has the Holy Spirit. . . . Although he still 'sleeps' and still awaits the resurrection of the body, which alone will give him full life, the dead Christian *has* the Holy Spirit." ¹⁶ Cullmann differs with Karl Barth, ^{*} and many others, who hold that the transformation of the body occurs for each person immediately after his death, Cullmann stating that the New Testament views the dead in Christ as not obtaining their resurrection bodies until the general resurrection day. Cullmann further states that as the Christian person is grasped by the Holy Spirit before death, Christ within the inner man has already transformed him; hence death can do him no harm, for the dead are with Christ during the interim; but the resurrection body is not given to the Christian until the general resurrection day. For the interim "they are 'with Christ' or 'in paradise' or in 'Abraham's bosom' or, according to Rev. 6:9, 'under the altar.' All these are simply various images of special nearness to God, but the most usual image for Paul is: 'They are asleep.'" ¹⁷ For the Christian the body is a temple of God (I Cor. 6:19), always animated by the Holy

^{*} *Dogmatics in Outline* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), pp. 154, 155: "The man who does not know what death is does not know either what resurrection is. It needs the witness of the Holy Spirit, the witness of the Word of God proclaimed and heard in Scripture, the witness of the risen Christ, in order to believe that there shall be light and that this light shall complete our completed life. The Holy Spirit tells us that we may live in that great hope."

Spirit. The view one draws from the thoughts of Cullmann is that, while the flesh (*sarx*) is the cloak of the body in the Christian's experience before death, and composes the framework of his terrestrial body, the glorified body will not be given to the Christian until the general resurrection day.

Anticipation of the general resurrection day belongs basically to apocalyptic eschatology; in the New Testament it is observed primarily in the Book of Revelation, and in a lesser way in Paul's letters to the Thessalonians. I Thessalonians anticipates Christ's coming "like a thief in the night" (I Thess. 5:2) to usher in the general resurrection day, with the resurrected dead being the first to meet their Lord, followed by Christians who are yet alive. Paul expresses the heart of his message: "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep (I Thess. 4:14). . . . For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him" (I Thess. 5:9, 10). In II Thessalonians Paul anticipates the general resurrection day, initiated by Christ's return, after the coming of "the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaim-

ing himself to be God" (2:3-5). While some look upon these words as referring to the Nero *redivivus* myth, and coming after Nero's death in A.D. 68, when Nero was feared alive in Parthia and ready to lead the Parthian soldiers against the Roman Empire, others view these words as those of Paul who discerns the coming of the antichrist as one like Caligula, who in A.D. 41 brought forth a decree that his bust be worshipped by the Jews in Jerusalem. In either instance the words here denote an awful calamity of the temple desecration to occur before the return of Christ and his initiation of the general resurrection day.

The Book of Revelation is the cardinal example of apocalyptic eschatology in the New Testament, written about 95 in the reign of the Emperor Domitian, with its portrait of the general resurrection day and the hope for the faithful sharing in "the New Jerusalem." Departing from the common Jewish concept that all souls are in Sheol awaiting the resurrection day, Revelation depicts the martyred Christians resting under the altar of the "heavenly" temple, while all others, including faithful Christians who die normal deaths, remain in Sheol. The martyrs will arise to share the first resurrection day with Christ, to reign with him for a thousand years; and then after the great battle at Armageddon will come the general resurrection, with Sheol giving up all the dead. While the unfaithful die their "second death" and are cast

into the lake of fire, the faithful, whose names are written in "the book of life," will have their home in "the New Jerusalem." In this holy city, a vast cubical sacred like the "holy of holies," they will have as their Light their resurrected Lord, who is the Lord of lords and the King of kings; there will be no darkness nor sorrow there, "no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb" (21:23); their Lord, who in his crucifixion is depicted as the Lamb, will become their victorious Lord, depicted by the Lion. The "144,000," who in their faithfulness on earth were animated by the Holy Spirit and refused to worship the Roman Emperor as a god, will become citizens of the non-physical, spiritual city of the New Jerusalem; hence their need only of their "spiritual" or "glorified" bodies.

Apocalyptic thoughts in Thessalonians and Revelation are thus giving us this message: Though we are "raised up" in our lifetime as faithful Christians related to Jesus' resurrection, we wait until the final resurrection day at the end of present world history to have our fleshly bodies transformed into our spiritual bodies. Though our inner persons have been changed by our relation to Jesus' resurrection before the event of death, our bodies will not be changed until the general resurrection day. Cullmann well summarizes this fact: "For the inner man, thanks to the transformation by the quickening power of the Holy

Spirit, the resurrection can take place already in this present life: through the 'renewal from day to day.' The flesh, however, still maintains its seat in our body. The transformation of the body does not take place until the End, when the whole creation will be made new by the Holy Spirit, when there will be no death and no corruption. . . . The resurrection of the body, whose substance will no longer be that of the flesh, but that of the Holy Spirit, is only a part of the whole new creation."¹⁸ As man on the day of general resurrection will have a new (spiritual) body, so also will there be a new (spiritual) heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1; II Pet. 3:13).

The apocalyptic hope regarding man's hope for life after death and of the general resurrection day is clothed with the poetry of apocalyptic mythology, yet underneath the language of symbolism is an abiding credo of faith: the resurrection of Jesus Christ has given us as Christians a surety of our resurrection! "Dungeon, fire, and sword" can in no way dismay this faith in our resurrection!

As one moves from the Thessalonians-Revelation writings to the Gospel of John and to Paul's later letters after his three years' sojourn at Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10; 20:31—three months in the synagogue, and two years lecturing daily in the hall of Tyrannus), one finds the eschatology related to Jesus' resurrection moving more to the present "now": that is, into

“realized eschatology.” Facts infer an “Ephesian school of Christian thought” with its stress upon the power of Jesus’ resurrection as present now for both the individual and the Church. For Paul the Church is the community in which the fellowship of Christian believers has become the “body of Christ” (I Cor. 12:27ff.; Rom. 12:4ff.; also in the Pauline letter to the Eph. 5:21ff.; 2:19-22; 4:12, 13). Within this corporate body of believers, animated by the Holy Spirit, the resurrected Christ is the Spirit which gives to the fellowship an organic nature, each member’s *charisma* (spiritual gift) tested by *agape* (redemptive love, I Cor. 13).

In various ways Paul discerns the Spirit of the resurrected Christ as the *élan vital* for the individual believer: If Christ is within him, the believer’s spirit is alive to righteousness, whereby he becomes a son of God and a fellow heir with Christ (Rom. 8:10-17); Christ becomes the power of God and the wisdom of God for the believer (I Cor. 1:24); we are Christ’s and Christ is God’s (3:23); our bodies are members of Christ (I Cor. 6:15); any man in Christ becomes a new creature (II Cor. 5:17); to live is Christ (Phil. 1:21); the believer can do all things through Christ who strengthens him (Phil. 4:13); Christ in the believer gives him the hope of glory (Col. 1:27); Christ in one’s heart brings peace, joy, and thankfulness (Col. 3:15-17). As the believer shares mystically the

death and resurrection of his risen Lord he dies daily (I Cor. 15:31), and as he dies with Christ he also lives with him (Rom. 6:8). Paul thus sees the cross and the resurrection in a threefold manner: these events happened in history, on a Good Friday and an Easter Sunday; they are written into the universe and thus have cosmic value as God's predestined plan for all mankind to find salvation (Rom. 9-11); they have personal value for the faithful Christian, as they create a mystical "way of life" for the Christian to share Jesus' death and resurrection (see also John 12:20-26).

The reasons for Paul's change of eschatology in relation to Christ's resurrection, when his Thessalonian letters are compared with his post-Ephesus letters, is not altogether inherent in the biblical writing. Apparently there was an "Ephesian school" of Christian thought to which both Paul and the authors of the Johannine writings belonged and which they both gave influence and received stimulus. Since both Paul (cf. Col. 1:15-20; 2:9) and the author of the Gospel of John (1:1-14) show Logos Christology views similar to those of Philo,* it is conceivable that the thinking of Philo and others of the Alexandrian school of thinking left their impress in Ephesus. For Philo the Logos was the inspiration for all truth, whether it affected the reasoning of the Greek philosopher or in-

* Philo refers to the Logos more than 1300 times in his various writings.

spired God's revelation through the Hebrew prophet. The Logos was furthermore the creative agency between God and the world, never pantheistically immersed in the world, yet giving form to all aspects of creation in the world. Man by meditating on the Logos found the secret of his own salvation. Though the creator God was transcendent, he was immanent in both creation and worship through the Logos, which thus brought him in intimate closeness to man and nature. Philo gives qualitative terms to the Logos, similar to those found in the Gospel of John: The Logos is the "leader of the way," "the shepherd," "the high priest," "the healer," "the sustenance of the soul." "The Logos distributes to all the heavenly food of the soul, which is called manna." "They who have real knowledge of the one Creator and Father of all things are rightly addressed as the sons of the one God." Through the Logos men become sons of God and have immortality in their souls, since through the Logos men are able to lay hold of the spiritual life. While the Logos for Philo remains a principle, and in the Gospel of John becomes incarnate in the human flesh of Jesus Christ, it is obvious that Philo's thoughts and words regarding the Logos left their influence in Ephesus, which as a setting of religious thought likewise left impression in the thinking of both Paul and the authors of the Johannine writings.

The theme in the Gospel of John is: "For God so

loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life," (3:16). The judgment day in John is a present event, whereby light and eternal life come to the believer, and the wrath of God visits the unbeliever (3:36). "As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will . . . he has passed from death to life" (5:21, 24). Christ is "the living bread which came down from heaven," and anyone who shares in him as the bread of life will live forever (6:50, 51). Even before Christ received his glorified body, he left his Spirit with his believers (7:39). To his followers the resurrected Christ speaks, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (11:25, 26). Those who share Christ's death share his resurrection in the same way as a grain of wheat in the earth dies to itself and bears much fruit (12:24f.). In sharing Christ's resurrection the Christian believers share the Holy Spirit, which counsels them, and brings them peace and truth (14:25f.). The fellowship as an "eschatological community" is like the vine and the branches, a mystical fellowship of believers with the resurrected Christ, similar to the branches and the vine, with God as the one who with his grace cares for the fellowship, love (*agape*) being the test of communion or union (15:1-17).

To compare the eschatology of Thessalonians-Revelation with the Gospel of John and Paul's post-Ephesus writings is to make one aware that we have New Testament "theologies," rather than New Testament "theology," though there runs a unity throughout the New Testament fashioned to a large degree by the consistent view of the Jesus' resurrection in all the writings, along with the other concepts related to the resurrection, such as the death, ascension, descension, and return of Christ. The former apocalyptic eschatologies compose the stress on "consistent-eschatology," while the latter eschatologies are related primarily to "realized eschatology." One item they share in common for their vitality and stimulus: Jesus' resurrection from the dead gives certainty to the faithful Christian's resurrection, whether it be in the present "now," immediately after death, or as a consummated reward on the general resurrection day.

THE RESURRECTION AND CHRISTOLOGY

Emil Brunner writes that "the risen Lord is recognizable as the same Jesus whom we knew in His earthly life."¹⁹ Such a statement can be correlated to the Christological titles about Jesus and the effect of the resurrection upon them. Fifty-five titles are related to the person of Jesus in the New Testament, all of them employed to reveal and explain the "mystery"

of Jesus. Which of these titles were used before Jesus' death and resurrection, and which arose after the resurrection, is a matter of diverse agreement. John Knox senses the views of many scholars regarding this problem: "We can hardly account for the christological faith of the early Church without assuming the existence of something extraordinary in the consciousness of Jesus; and yet there are, as we have seen, sound grounds for doubt that he thought of himself either as the Messiah or as the Son of man or yet as the Servant."²⁰ There are several obvious names which are used for Jesus before his resurrection: Son of Joseph, Son of Mary, Teacher (twenty-four times), Master, Rabbi, Rabboni, Prophet. The name "Jesus" is used for him more than 430 times in the New Testament. Coming from the Hebrew *Jeshua* or *Jehosua* (Joshua), the name means "God's salvation." Though the name had popular usage in New Testament times, in the second century it fell into dispopularity among Jews, because of their antipathy for Christianity, and among Christians, because there were other persons called "Jesus" who lacked the stature of Jesus Christ. The name "Jesus" reaches its highest reverence in Paul's letter to the Philippians (2:10); "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow."

Some feel that the highest name given to Jesus before his resurrection is that of "prophet." Frederick C. Grant expresses this view: "Was Jesus then only

a prophet? It may be a hard saying, but after all 'prophet' is only one more historical category—and Jesus was unique. In fact, on Jewish lips 'prophet' was the highest possible category, next to God himself."²¹ Like the prophets of Israel, Jesus was a Spirit-filled spokesman; yet he differed from former prophets whose messages were prefaced, "Thus says the Lord," for Jesus introduced his teachings with "But I say unto you." He is called "prophet" by the woman of Samaria (John 4:19), by the blind man (John 9:17), by the multitudes who welcome him into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:11), by the crowds during his last Jerusalem days (Matt. 21:46). He looks upon himself as a prophet (Mark 6:4; Luke 13:33). Along with that of prophet, the names of Son of Mary, Son of Joseph, Teacher, and Rabbi were applied to Jesus before his death and resurrection.

Four major Christological titles used for Jesus in the New Testament are: Son of man, Son of God, Lord, and Servant—all of which are names for Jesus either first used after or deepened by the resurrection event. Among these four titles that of *the Son of man* is the most complex. Coming out of the Old Testament, the title sometimes is merely a synonym for "man" (Ps. 8:4; 89 times in Ezekiel); in other instances it refers to the nation or the Jewish community, which will assume the role of saviourhood (as indicated in Dan. 7: 14); at still other times it is

an apocalyptic title for a divinely appointed person who will bring salvation by God's intervention for his chosen people (as especially discerned in Enoch 37-71). In the New Testament the term is used many times by Jesus in reference to himself in the Four Gospels; but only once in the New Testament is Jesus called "Son of man" by another person, that being where Stephen at his martyrdom refers to Jesus "the Son of man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). Twice in Revelation (1:13, 14:14) Jesus is referred to by another as "one *like* a son of man," similar to the reference in Dan. 7:14.

In what way did Jesus look upon himself as the Son of man, and how did the resurrection affect the view of the early Church regarding Jesus as the Son of man? These are basic questions to face. Oscar Cullmann sees the problem: "We must reckon with the possibility that Jesus always used 'Son of Man' in a deliberately ambiguous sense. . . . We must (also) differentiate between two categories of Jesus' sayings about the Son of Man: first, those in which he uses the title with reference to the *eschatological* work he must fulfil in the future; second, those in which he applies it to his *earthly* work."²² Certainly the early Church did not originate the phrase "Son of man," for it appears about seventy times in the Synoptic Gospels, always in Jesus' self-reference. Ten of these sayings relate to Jesus as the "suffering Son of man"

The Resurrection and Related Theological Events

(Mark 8:31; 9:12, 31; 10:33, 45; Mark 14:21, 41; Matt. 26:2; Luke 17:25, 24:6, 7). Twenty designate Jesus as the apocalyptic "Son of man" (Mark 8:38; 13:26; 14:62; Luke 11:30; 12:8, 40; 17:22, 24,30; 18:8, 21:36; Matt. 13:41; 16:28; 19:28; 24:29, 30, 39; 25:31). Eleven sayings refer to Jesus as "Son of man" with neither the apocalyptic nor the suffering connotations (Mark 2:10, 27-28; 9:9; Luke 6:22; 7:34; 9:58; 12:10; 19:10; 22:48; Matt. 13:37; 16:13).

From this array of diverse "Son of man" sayings of Jesus about himself several conclusions are inferred: (1) Jesus did refer to himself as "Son of man," most probably in the way evidenced in the prophet Ezekiel or Psalm 8 as "*man*" or "*the representative man*." (2) Many of the sayings involving "Son of man" have been colored by the resurrection event. (3) The suffering Servant's relationship to the Son of man stems from the usage in the Gospel of Mark, a gospel sent to a Christian group at Rome, where suffering needed to be met, and which gives about one-half of its space to Jesus as a suffering Servant (8:31-16:8). The first time that the Son of man is related to Jesus' suffering in the Gospels is in Mark 8:31: "The Son of man must suffer many things." (4) The apocalyptic sayings related to Jesus as the Son of man are largely indebted to the added interpretation of the early Church. B. Harvie Branscomb's words indicate this view: "The section (Mark 13:3-37, the Little Apocalypse) appears

to have been an apocalyptic prophecy which has been modified in the light of the experiences of the Church. . . . We have thus in Mark xiii an apocalyptic document composed some time earlier than A.D. 70, reflecting conventional apocalyptic beliefs in a Christian form. It may be that genuine sayings of Jesus are to be found in the chapter, but the identification of these in the midst of a document which must be regarded as the product of Christian hope and prophecy is highly conjectural.”²³

The Son of man concept regarding Jesus’ Messiahship would have strange meaning for the Gentile world; its development stems from the Palestinian Christian community, where “Son of man” usage comes from Jewish religious writings. Especially in the apocalyptic utterances, where Jesus is expected to return in a dramatic fashion to complete his Messianic mission, and in the sayings related to his death and suffering, do we find the early Church deeply inspired by the resurrection event (Mark 13; Matt. 24:1-44; Luke 21:5-36). For those sharing the resurrection experience within the Church, the fruits of the kingdom have already begun; with this feeling of power and love as they share the life of their resurrected Lord they are inspired to believe that before their generation has passed away his kingdom will be consummated for all mankind. In the Gospel of John, where “Son of man” is synonymous with the resur-

rected Christ of experience, the Christians feel that already they have come into possession of eternal life (John 3:13, 14; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 12:23, 31). The Church has become the vehicle of eternity coming into time, the result of Jesus' resurrection being a continuing personal experience.

"All theology became Christology," writes Oscar Cullmann.²⁴ Such a statement is true of the early Christians because of the resurrection of Jesus. Through the empowering of this event they realized that Jesus was more than a prophet or teacher or rabbi, and certainly more than a crucified martyr. As the gospel moved from Palestinian soil to Hellenistic territory, the gospel *about* Jesus Christ began to be "modernized" to meet Gentile needs. If Son of man as a Christological title held significance mainly for Jewish Christians, *Son of God* became a significant title in the post-resurrection era for Gentile believers. It already held meaning for Gentiles because of its usage in the mysteries of Babylonia and Egypt, and in the reverence paid by the Romans to their Emperors called Augustus since the death of Octavius, A.D. 14. Egyptian Ptolemies, considered descendents of the god Ra, were acclaimed with divine honors and called "son of god." Inscriptions in Pergamum, Tarsus, and Magnesia show that Roman Emperors Caligula, Domitian, and Hadrian were called *divi filius* (son of god). Hellenism went even further, dis-

cerning any person who showed some kind of divine power (such as a miracle worker) as a son of god. Lucian speaks of a person, Alexander of Abonoteichus, and Philostratus mentions Apollonius of Tyana, each as a son of god, because each showed miraculous powers. Origen (*Against Celsus*, 7:9) speaks of people in Syria and Palestine who said of themselves, "I am the son of god." Though Philo felt that to know God is to be a son of God, he never held that man by knowing God could be deified (*De Conf.*, 145).

Out of the Old Testament there comes also an important reference from Psalm 2, which Judaism interpreted in a Messianic way to refer to the king as being the son of God. Some believe that out of this usage of Psalm 2, plus the traditions which viewed Jesus at the baptism and the transfiguration as the Son of God, this psalm as such played the central role in Jesus' being called "Son of God." The Gospel of Mark views Jesus as being "adopted" at his baptism as the Son of God (Mark 1:1f.); the transfiguration scene convinces Jesus' three closest disciples that he is the Son of God (Mark 9:2-8); the centurion in viewing Jesus' death on the cross cries out, "Truly this man was Son of God" (Mark 15:39). The Apostle Paul sees the title as arising from Jesus' resurrection: "The gospel concerning his Son . . . designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord"

(Rom. 1:3). Rudolf Bultmann accords to this: "If it was originally an Easter story, then it may be regarded along with Romans 1:3 as proving that the earliest Church called Jesus Son of God (messianic) because that was what the resurrection made him."²⁵

"The Resurrection had given to His person a new dimension, and it was inevitable that He who must manifestly exercise lordship over His community should be called 'the Lord,'" writes Vincent Taylor.²⁶ *Lord* became the most meaningful Christological title for Jesus, and scholars feel a surety that the title "Lord" belongs entirely to the post-resurrection Christian community, except for the one instance where Jesus speaks to his disciples regarding the colt to ride: "If any one says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it'" (Mark 11:3). Some would say that "the Lord" in this instance refers not to Jesus but to the owner of the colt, since the Greek word for Lord (*kupios*) means "lord," "master," "owner."

"Lord" is a term used in Jewish and Gentile backgrounds of the time. Roman Emperors of the first century (Domitian, Nero, Claudius, and Caligula) were called "lord," as were Agrippa I and II; mystery cults like Sarapis, Hermes-Thoth, and Osiris called their gods "lord"; Ptolemy XIII was hailed as "lord." Hence at the time of the Christian faith emerging from Palestinian soil to Hellenistic surroundings, the title "Lord" had deep meaning for Gentile Christians. Also

out of the Old Testament the word Lord (*kupios*) becomes the term applied to the Hebrew *Adonai* or "Lord," which became a substitute for the name Yahweh. The term "Lord" for Jesus in the post-resurrection communities on Greek soil took central place of all Christological titles, the term being used interchangeably for God and Christ. Paul speaks of Jesus Christ as "Lord" more than 130 times; the pastoral letters use the term "Lord" for Jesus 18 times; the general letters use the name "Lord" 29 times; Acts employs the term 26 times; Revelation calls Jesus "Lord" five times; and the Epistle to the Hebrews uses the expression four times.

While Paul uses the term "Lord" more than any other New Testament writer, Paul is not the inventor of the title, for it was a name he undoubtedly found already used in places like Tarsus, Damascus, and Antioch (Syria). Jesus Christ as Lord holds a central place in the Church in several ways: the Eucharist becomes the *Lord's* supper' (I Cor. 11:20); baptisms are sealed in the name of our *Lord* Jesus Christ (I Cor. 6:11); Jesus Christ as *Lord* is the central note in Christian preaching (II Cor. 4:5); as *Lord*, Jesus Christ is invoked in prayers (I Cor. 1:2; Acts 1:14, 21, 22:16; II Tim. 2:22; Eph. 5:20). *Lord* Jesus Christ becomes the central affirmation of the Christian credo (I Cor. 12:3; Rom. 10:9; Phil. 2:11); hymns and doxologies are sung to him as *Lord* (II Tim. 4:18; Eph.

5:20); Jesus Christ as *Lord*, with his humility and unselfish service for others, becomes the "example" for all Christians, who would have the "mind of Christ" (Phil. 2:1-11).

Numerous other significant Christological titles, inspired by the Christian communities in their experience of the resurrected Lord in their church life, are: the Judge (Heb. 12:23; Jas. 4:12, 5:9; Acts 10:42; II Tim. 4:8); the Mediator (Heb. 12:24; I Tim. 2:5); the High Priest (Heb. 2:17, 3:1, 4:14, 15, 5:5, 10, 6:20, 7:26, 8:1, 9:11); the Paraclete or Comforter or Counselor (I John 21; John 14:26, 15:26, 16:7); the Image of God (II Cor. 4:4, Col. 1:15); the Light of the World (John 8:12, 9:5, 12:46); the Bread of Life (John 6:35, 48, 51); the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25); the Alpha and the Omega [the First and the Last] (Rev. 1:17, 2:8, 22:13); the Logos [Word] (John 1:1, 14; I John 1:1-4, inferred; Col. 1:15-20, inferred; Heb. 1:1-3, inferred); Saviour (John 4:42; Acts 5:31, 13:23; Phil. 3:20; II Tim. 1:10; Tit. 1:4, 2:13, 3:6; I John 4:14; II Pet. 1:1, 11; 2:20; 3:2, 18); the Lamb (besides 28 times in Revelation, John 1:29, 36).

Today we hear about "the new quest of the historical Jesus," a quest which sees the Jesus of history related to the resurrected Lord. The new quest for the historical Jesus attempts to relate or identify the *kerygma* of the early Church with the sayings of the

historical Jesus. "Hence the purpose of a new quest of the historical Jesus would be to test the validity of the *kerygma*'s identification of *its* understanding of existence with *Jesus*' existence." ²⁷

The encounter of the present-day Christian is with both the earthly Jesus and the heavenly Lord, the latter reflecting the former after the Easter miracle of the resurrection. Sayings of Jesus which arose in the *kerygma* of the early Church have been transferred to Jesus' lips in certain instances, especially those concerned with Jesus' death and resurrection, climaxed in such words as: "And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). Such a statement, along with others, obviously a result of the preaching of the Church which saw Jesus as the heavenly Lord, transmitted these teachings with the others of Jesus' earthly sayings, because the unity of the heavenly Lord and the earthly Jesus was held.

As this position is further viewed, the historical Jesus is viewed as belonging to the *past*, while the Jesus of the *kerygma* is encountered *now*. Käsemann puts it as follows: "In so far as one wishes to speak of a modification of faith before and after Easter, it can only be said that 'once' became 'once for all,' the isolated encounter with Jesus limited by death be-

came that presence of the exalted Lord such as the Fourth Gospel describes.”²⁸ The Jesus who spoke on Palestinian soil ca. A.D. 30 continued to speak after the resurrection to Christian believers throughout the whole world. The resurrection of Jesus brought the Jesus of history into a transcendent relationship for all men to encounter. While Jesus’ message was eschatological, and looked forward to the coming of the new age, the *kerygma* of the earthly Church was Christological and was concerned with the Christian within the Church encountering the resurrected Lord in the present. Paul as an exemplar of the *kerygma* of the Church called upon his followers to die and to rise with Christ (Rom. 6:3-11; 8:13-17; 14:7-9).

RESURRECTION AND THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The power of the Spirit in the Church and the gift of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the early Christians were “signs” of the resurrection “at work” in the life of the Christian community. Two great miracles are observed in the Bible: One is set in the Old Testament, the emancipation of the Hebrews from Egypt under Moses’ leadership and their crossing of the Red Sea. This miracle is the “miracle of all miracles” in the Old Testament, a “sign” of God’s power at work in history; and without this miraculous event taking

place Judaism as a religion never would have occurred, for the Hebrews would have remained in Egypt, amalgamated in some Egyptian religious cult.

The "miracle of all miracles" in the New Testament is the resurrection of Jesus Christ, another great "sign" of the power of God working in history; for without the resurrection of Jesus, the crucifixion of Jesus would have remained but a tragic event in history, and the disappointed followers of Jesus would have returned to their worship as members of the synagogue in Judaism.

The resurrection of Jesus left two other vital signs among the faithful friends of Jesus: (1) the gift of the Holy Spirit; and (2) the Church as the "body of Christ" in which the gifts of the Spirit were made evident. Emil Brunner states regarding these continuing signs of the power of the resurrection: "The new aeon manifests itself not merely through the resurrection of Jesus but also just as much through the new life, the life in the Holy Ghost, life in the presence of the Risen Saviour, and in communion with Him a life which differentiates believers from unbelievers, from those in the world, and which makes them members of the body of Christ, of the Church."²⁹

Two writings especially describe the initial gift of the Holy Spirit: the Gospel of John and the Acts of the Apostles. In the Gospel of John (20: 16-22) the resurrection of Jesus, his ascension, and the gift of the

Holy Spirit occur on the same day; the resurrection, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the spiritualized return (*parousia*: John 14:15-25) of Jesus as the Counselor or Comforter (Paraclete) are seen as contained in one dynamic experience. "For John the resurrection of Jesus, Pentecost, and the *parousia* of Jesus are one and the same event, and those who believe have already eternal life." ³⁰ In the "realized eschatology" of the Gospel of John the second coming of Jesus as a future hope has been moved into the present, where he has through his resurrection become the Counselor, the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit. In the Acts of the Apostles (2:16-21) the Holy Spirit, as prophesied by the prophet Joel, came with mighty power at Pentecost upon the crowd to whom Peter preached; and from this time on, filled with the Holy Spirit (the term used 42 times in Acts), the converts of Christianity evangelized the Roman Empire from Palestine to Italy. Pentecost for members of Judaism was reckoned by rabbis as a feast in memory of the gift of the Law at Mount Sinai, fifty days after the Israelites' miraculous exodus from Egypt, thus sealing the covenant between God and his chosen people. Pentecost for the Christians, fifty days after Jesus' miraculous "exodus" from his grave through the resurrection, sealed the new covenant between God and his newly chosen people, with the Church becoming the institution through which the gift of the Spirit con-

tinued to work. "Pentecost is Babel in reverse," says Alan Richardson; "the parable of the Tower of Babel in Gen. 11:1-9 tells of how, because of pride, men had lost their ability to speak with one another; they had no common language because they were not bound together in common obedience to God's will. St. Luke seeks to show how God wills to re-create mankind into one great family, united in one covenant of love through Jesus Christ, speaking in the one universal language of the Holy Spirit."³¹

The New Testament stresses the immanence of God working in history. His Spirit (*pneuma*) was never detached from a close, warm relationship to mankind, but men had failed to discern his immanence until the incarnation of his Spirit in Jesus Christ; and after Jesus' resurrection the continuing awareness of God's Spirit in their faithful lives was a continuing reality. Paul often speaks of God's immanence, or the Spirit of the resurrected Lord, as "Christ in me," while Acts speaks of his immanence as that of the Holy Spirit; but in either case "Christ in me" and the "Holy Spirit" are related to and synonymous with the Spirit of the resurrected Christ, which is akin to the immanence of God with its empowering redemptive love (*agape*).

The gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2) with the conversion of three thousand to the Christian movement is not the "birthday" of the Church, for the genesis of the Church goes back into the Old

Testament, where we find the faithful remnant (Isa. 49:1-12). Pentecost is, however, the festival in the Acts of the Apostles where the Christian Church takes great momentum, with the converts going to various parts of the Mediterranean world to plant the seeds for the growth of future churches. The Spirit-filled churches thus become the "body of Christ" in which the members through their faith possess the "gifts" of the Spirit made evident in prophecy, teaching, working of miracles, apostleship, speaking with tongues (Rom. 12:4-8; I Cor. 12:4-11). [The Church is also the Bride of Christ (Eph. 5:23-33), and the spiritual edifice of which Christ is the cornerstone and the prophets and apostles are foundation stones (Eph. 2:19-22)]. The test of each person becoming a healthful member of the body of Christ is determined, however, by the love (*agape*) he shows (Rom. 12:9-12; I Cor. 13). The Church thus becomes the eschatological community, wherein the members through faith in their resurrected Lord become members of the body of Christ. If the nucleus of the Church was begun among the faithful remnant of Israel (the Old Israel), it is thus fully realized as the eschatological community among faithful Christians who compose the New Israel or the "True" Israel.

The Church is the resurrection-body of Christ; it came into existence as the Holy Spirit was effulged by the risen Lord and ascended upon his disciples (Mark

9:1; John 20:22; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4). The Church thus is the new creation where faithful followers of Christ know their Lord no longer after the flesh but in spirit (II Cor. 5:16f.). Within the Church, where the certainty of the resurrection exists among the members, there is the surety that neither life nor death can separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord (Rom. 8:39). As new members enter into the fellowship of their resurrected Lord in the Church, their baptism with a new spirit is a mystical sharing of the death and resurrection of their Lord; as they are buried with him "by baptism into death," they walk with him in newness of life, sharing his resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5; Acts 19:4-7); at the Lord's Supper they commune with their risen Lord, remembering him as they participate in the bread and the cup, proclaiming "the Lord's death until he comes" (I Cor. 11:23-26). Within this blessed fellowship the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) gives illustration as to how its members should live within the body of Christ, the Church.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND THE RESURRECTION

How to use the Sermon on the Mount has been a complex problem for interpreters of the New Testament. Albert Schweitzer looked upon it as an "interim

ethic" to be used only by Jesus' followers until his return before their generation had passed away (Mark 13:30). Martin Luther discerned it as a set of ideas which painted man as he *ought* to be; and when by contrast he saw himself in his actuality, he was driven in despair to Jesus Christ and his cross as his only way of salvation; and thus the Sermon held little value for social betterment. The Roman Catholic Church sees the Sermon on the Mount as containing ideas too ideal for any man living in the world to use; hence that church stresses the use of the Sermon as applicable only to monks and nuns who have renounced the world, and point laymen to employ the ethical principles laid down by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica*. Others view the Sermon on the Mount as containing ethical principles by which mankind should *build* the kingdom of God.

The real purpose of the Sermon on the Mount, however, must be seen in the light of a *religious* ethic, with concepts to show how transformed Christians ought to live in the world after having found their right relationship to God in faith and worship. The resurrection of Jesus gave a new focus to the use of the Sermon on the Mount. Before Jesus' resurrection, during his earthly ministry, the 111 verses of the Sermon on the Mount were designated by Jesus as containing the pure will of God. Each of its sayings contained a *sign* of the coming kingdom, to be taken

seriously by faithful persons preparing themselves for the arrival of God's new age. Before Jesus' death his followers saw incarnate within him *the sign* of the coming kingdom. Jesus' initial thinking was theocentric, as he told men how they ought to live if they were to be ready for God's kingdom. After Easter, however, the teachings of the Sermon took on new connotations: they became part of the didactic gospel of Jesus *Christ*, and were illustrations as to how men ought to live within the fellowship of the Church. They are not to be considered as an "interim ethic," but as an ethic representing the pure will of God meant for all time. "These commandments were given not for the short time intervening between the present and the end of the world. They were given for eternity, because they represent the will of the eternal God."³² While the Sermon describes absolute concepts by which men are to live, the verses compose both a *hope* and a *judgment* for Christians: a *hope* since they are an ideal toward which Christian people continue to "press on," and a *judgment* because they act as a criticism of Christians when they wander from these principles of daily living. "Before Easter the simple words which we read in the Sermon on the Mount had more value than precepts of the sages, because the man who uttered them was a warrant of the Kingdom of Heaven, the personal embodiment of all faith and hope. His sayings were for

his listeners judgment and a promise in the name of God. After Easter they became the law which the heavenly Lord has given. Now, however, the Lord has also given his Holy Spirit in order to strengthen his disciples and to fit them for a life according to the will of God, but within the limitations of an 'earthly' existence." ³³

Had it not been for the resurrection of Jesus, the teachings within the Sermon on the Mount would have remained merely a collection of teachings, many of them found within Judaism, brought together by a Jewish teacher called Jesus, who suffered a martyr's death. Because of the resurrection of Jesus these teachings became the *magna carta* of Jesus Christ in the Church, the heart of the Christian covenant, the greatest set of ethical rules known by mankind, and a sermon which God's Holy Spirit will help mankind to employ, if individuals of Christian concern turn to him through faith for their support and guidance. "Jesus meant his ethic to be a real design for living, not a blue-print for Utopia. Further, we must never forget that the Sermon is an ethic for those who call Christ Lord and Saviour. . . . We are not asked to scale the heights of the Sermon in our own unaided strength; we are offered the continuing presence through the Spirit of him who promised 'Lo, I am with you always.' " ³⁴

ASCENSION AND RESURRECTION

"He ascended into heaven . . ." says the Apostles' Creed, indicating the second-century *belief* that Jesus' ascension played an important role in Christian credal thought, along with Jesus' death and resurrection. Modern man, however, asks the question: What is the meaning of Jesus' ascension for me today, and how is it related to Jesus' resurrection? H. D. A. Major has well stated the situation: "For modern Christians, who live in the days of the Copernican astronomy, the Ascension of Christ signifies, not His elevation into the sky, but His transition from this world of sense and space into the eternal invisible sphere."³⁵ If the Apostles' Creed separated the ascension from Jesus' resurrection, the primitive Christian preaching by contrast kept a closer affinity between the ascension and the resurrection. In the Epistle of Barnabas (written ca. 130) a passage has the ascension and the resurrection occurring on the same day: "Wherefore also we keep the eighth day for rejoicing, in which Jesus also rose from the dead, and having been manifested ascended into the heavens" (16:19). The Apocalypse of Peter, written in the early part of the second century, views the transfiguration event as an ascension story. The Gospel of Luke (24:50ff.) speaks of Jesus being taken from the sight of his disciples upon blessing them, after which they returned home praising

God. The Gospel of Matthew and the shorter ending of the Gospel of Mark (which ends with 16:8) do not mention the ascension. While Luke in his gospel views the ascension as taking place on the eve of the resurrection, in the Acts of the Apostles Luke states that the ascension took place forty days after the resurrection (Acts 1:3-11), the only place in the New Testament where a forty-day interim is mentioned. Contrary to the Epistle of Barnabas and the Gospel of Luke, the ascension in the Acts of the Apostles did not take place on Sunday but on Thursday. Assuming that Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, the question is raised: Did Luke in the interval between the writing of the Gospel and the Acts become aware of a more detailed story of the ascension which he preferred to that used in the gospel? The Gospel of John views the gift of the Spirit as coming on Easter Sunday eve, after Jesus had already ascended to the Father (John 20:16-20). In other passages the ascension and the resurrection are not treated as separate events (I Pet. 3:21f.; I Tim. 2:16; Acts 2:32f.; Eph. 1:20, 4:9f.). While the Epistle to the Hebrews is based on the belief in the resurrection, it does not mention the word "resurrection," yet develops the exaltation of Jesus, the ascended Lord, as its central theme (1:3, 4:8).

"The New Testament *doctrine* of the ascension of Christ," according to Alan Richardson, "teaches three

fundamental truths concerning the Risen Lord: that he is our Prophet, Priest and King.”³⁶ As King who shares the throne with God, he has authority given him in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18; Mark 16:9; Acts 2:33; Rom. 8:34; I Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3, 13; I Pet. 3:22; Rev. 3:21). As Priest he makes intercession for his followers as he shares God’s right hand (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; I John 2:1; John 14:16; Acts 7:56). As Prophet, Christ is a prophet *par excellence* sent from God with a special message for mankind (Matt. 23:34; Luke 11:49; Mark 12:2-5; John 6:14; John 1:21; 7:40 Matt. 21:11). Throughout the New Testament in descriptions of the resurrection-ascension of Christ the writers are resorting to graphic, illustrative language, clothed in mythological pictures, to show Christ as one who has overcome demonic powers of the world, as one who in his resurrected self is laboring with God and with those who believe on him, and as one who is eternally everywhere. Both Ephesians and I Peter emphasize the *eternal universality* of Christ through his ascension: “In saying, He ascended, what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things” (Eph. 4:9, 10). “For Christ . . . went and preached to the spirits in prison . . . through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is

(ascended) at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him" (I Pet. 3:18-22).

There is not a consistent interpretation of the ascension in the New Testament as to *how* it occurred; but there is a thread throughout the New Testament which emphasizes that *there was a belief* in the ascension, and that it was associated with the resurrection of Jesus. Is it not a way of saying that with the resurrection of Jesus his power and incarnate relation to God continued in a strengthening fashion for those who by belief in him continued to share their awareness of his Spirit? Without the resurrection of Jesus there would have been no *doctrines* of the ascension; and without belief in the ascension the tangible meaning of Jesus' resurrection would have been diminished. Just as the *symbol* of Jesus' resurrection became a *fact* in the lives of the disciples of their living Lord, so the ascension as a *symbol* became a *fact* clothed in imagery and myth for the disciples of their Risen Lord. "It is as the Risen and Ascended Lord that He is the Lord (ὁ *kupios*)."³⁷

RESURRECTION AND DESCENT

The resurrection of Jesus, which emancipated him from the temporal confines of his physical body, gave to Jesus a universality in heaven, on earth, and in

Hades. His resurrected presence for all men to share is reflected in the Gospel of John: "Greater works than these will he do" (14:2). As the physically bound Jesus had been known only by his disciples and friends who were with him in the flesh, the resurrected Lord is everywhere for each of his followers to know and to labor with. Hence the "greater works than these shall he do." In his ascent to heaven the resurrected Lord became the co-judge with God and the one through whom his followers on earth could intercede. When faith in Christ as the only way for men to find salvation became the dogma of the early Church (Acts 4:12), some began to ask: What about those who had lived before the time of Christ, from the days of Noah down to the earthly life of Jesus? Would they not be able to share in salvation through faith in Christ? Such ponderings gave way to the belief in Jesus' descent into Hades and its association with his resurrection.

Christ's descent into Hades belongs to a chapter on Christian *doctrine*. It arose out of certain questions being asked: (1) Where was Christ in the three-day interim between his death and his resurrection? (2) Was it conceivable that good men who had lived before the birth of Jesus Christ would be condemned without having an opportunity to believe on Christ? (3) If God is a Father of everlasting mercy and forgiveness, would he not allow all his children to have

a chance to believe on Christ? One answer to these problems is given by Paul, where he discusses Christians being baptized on behalf of their loved ones who died before becoming Christians (I Cor. 15:29). The Shepherd of Hermas (9:16) mentions that it was the duty of Christian disciples at their death to go into Hades to preach and to baptize those living there. The descent of Jesus into Hades became a credal view of the early Church, and was placed in some formulas of the Apostles' Creed: "He descended into hell." Two New Testament books especially have references to Jesus' descent into Hades: I Peter (3:19;4:6) and Ephesians (4:9, 10). The apocryphal writing The Acts of Pilate narrates Jesus' descent into Hades and describes how all the righteous in Hades were resurrected, baptized in the Jordan river, and given access into Paradise. The Gospel of Bartholomew describes Jesus going into Hades after his crucifixion, that he "might bring up Adam and all them that were with him, according to the supplication of Michael the archangel." Psalm 16:10 may have been reflected upon by those in the early Church as having reference to Jesus' descent: "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption." Peter uses it in his sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:27). The early Church looked upon these words as having application to Jesus' descent, especially since Jesus in his opening sermon at Nazareth

saw himself (from Isa. 61:1) as the Lord's servant sent "to proclaim liberty to the captives" (Luke 4:17-18).

For Jesus to descend into Hades after his death was not contrary to first-century Jewish thought, since all souls went there at the event of "the first death." The Sadducees believed that all souls remained in that dreary netherworld; the Pharisees believed that on the judgment day all righteous men would be resurrected to find their rewards in the new age, while the unrighteous would die "the second death," signifying their punishments. Jesus' descent, however, associated with his resurrection had deeper connotations than those reserved for the descent of "everyman": In Ephesians the descent meant that Jesus Christ by his resurrection was universally everywhere: He who ascended also descended into the lower parts of the earth, "that he might fill all things" (Eph. 4:8, 9). In I Peter (3:19; 4:6) Christ's descent answered the three questions raised by the early Church: (1) all who lived before his earthly ministry were given chance to believe on him; (2) Christ's abode was here during the three days between his death and resurrection; (3) God's everlasting mercy would give every person a chance to believe on Christ, even though they lived prior to his earthly ministry. While Rudolf Bultmann feels that "the expression, 'descended into the lower parts of the earth,'

does not mean descent into hell, but corresponds to 'he ascended' and means the pre-existent Son's journey to earth,"³⁸ he does see in the ascent and the descent universal reverence paid to Jesus' Lordship: "Hence the whole cosmos—heavenly, earthly, and subterranean beings—must pay homage to the exalted 'Lord' (Phil. 2:10f.)."³⁹

The descent of Christ into Hades is to be seen along with Christ's ascension into heaven and his continuing fellowship on earth in the Church as the body of Christ. After Christ's resurrection, Christ in his "spiritual body" was no longer chained by flesh and blood; he was everywhere for men to believe on and to know. Such credal concepts as the ascension and the descension are Christian *beliefs*, which in the New Testament show their full development in the last decade of the first century, 90-100 (assuming such a dating for I Peter and Ephesians). They are reverential examples of both cosmological and anthropological myths used to clothe great Christian truths. The three-story universe—heaven above, the earth, and Hades below—needs to be demythologized for modern man with his Copernican astronomy. Likewise Christ's "ascent" and "descent" as devotional concepts regarding the universal Christ need to be demythologized, to show that at his resurrection Christ was *everywhere* for men to know: in his *descending* and *ascending* he was with his followers everywhere.

The ascension into heaven and the descension into Hades are graphic ways of saying that the resurrected Lord was found wherever there were faithful believers. Without the belief in the resurrection becoming an experiential fact in the lives of Jesus' followers, no ascension and descension concepts would have occurred. His resurrection, the ascension (eternally), and the descension (for three days) were a reality in Christian beliefs, the ascension considered simultaneously with Christ's resurrection, the descension as a momentary event in Christ's ministry in order that all men might find salvation through belief on Christ. There may be another deep note related to Christ's descent, that of Christ's renunciation. About this Ethelbert Stauffer writes, "The incarnation of Christ meant the coming down of a heavenly nature to this world. His death meant his going down into the underworld. So in the New Testament the descent into hell is the final realization of his coming down from heaven—his act of deepest renunciation."⁴⁰ If such a view be true, then the words of Jesus ring with clarity: "Whoever humbles himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23:12); and Paul's words about his Lord sound with a vibrant note: "He humbled himself . . . therefore God has highly exalted him" (Phil. 2:9).

THE RESURRECTION AND THE TRANSFIGURATION

Where the transfiguration story belongs (Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36) has been a problem to students of the New Testament. Albert Schweitzer places the transfiguration story (Mark 9:28-36) before the confession story at Caesarea Phillipi (Mark 8:27-33), holding that these two chapters in the Gospel of Mark were transposed. He feels that the idea of Jesus' messiahship as revealed to Peter, James, and John on the mount of transfiguration was to be a secret among Jesus and his three closest disciples, but that Peter later in a moment of emotional outburst let the secret be disclosed to the rest of the twelve when he said, "You are the Christ." Most scholars do not agree with Albert Schweitzer in his view that the transfiguration and the confession chapters in the Gospel of Mark were transposed, but retain the sequence of these chapters as recorded in the gospel, favoring the idea that the transfiguration deepens and indelibilizes to Jesus and his three disciples the meaning of Jesus being known as Messiah, when Jesus and his followers head toward Jerusalem.

There is, however, the question as to whether the story of Jesus' transfiguration is not a resurrection event, which belongs to the rest of the resurrection stories, rather than where it appears in the events before Jesus' death. The apocryphal Apocalypse of Peter

views the transfiguration event as an ascension story. Those who place the transfiguration as a resurrection story do so for various reasons: (1) They feel that Peter never would have denied Jesus (Mark 14:66-72; Matt. 26:69-75; Luke 22:56-62), nor would the other two disciples with Peter have fled from Jesus at the crucifixion, had they previously "experienced" Jesus on the mount of transfiguration; and further that the transfiguration story as it stands in the Gospel of Mark sequence as a confirmation of Jesus' prediction of his death and resurrection and of Peter's confession is difficult to place within the earthly ministry of Jesus. (2) The miracle stories of Jesus' earthly ministry show what Jesus can *do*, and are performed *by* Jesus, while the transfiguration story indicates as to who Jesus *is* (that is, the human person through whom God's divinity shines), and the miracle is performed *on* Jesus, not *by* him, thus more in accord with the resurrection stories, than with the pre-crucifixion events regarding Jesus. Like the resurrection events, the transfiguration story has Jesus *seen* as the exalted Lord: "Looking around they no longer *saw* anyone with them *but Jesus only*" (Mark 9:8; Matt. 17:8; Luke 9:36). But Jesus in the transfiguration scene is envisioned as someone more than the exalted Lord: He is one who has a glorified body (a body of *doxa*), similar to the experiences of Stephen who *sees* Jesus in heaven at God's right hand (Acts 7:55), or of Paul on the Damascus road who

sees his risen Lord (Acts 9:4-6; 22:7-10; 26:12-18). (4) The "after six days (Mark 9:2; Matt. 17:1) (Luke 9:28 says "eight days") in the transfiguration scene is suggested by scholars like Rudolf Bultmann and Erich Klostermann as having reference to six days after the occurrence of the crucifixion or the beginning of the resurrection; hence the transfiguration would occur as a resurrection event. (5) In the Book of Revelation (Rev. 11:6) Moses and Elijah (symbolized by the two olive trees and two lampstands) are looked upon as eschatological prophets who have been resurrected and have had their assumption to heaven in a cloud. If this tradition was so considered in the late first-century Christian tradition, it is not difficult to see Jesus' relation to these two great figures in a resurrection episode in the transfiguration scene. As in other stories related to the resurrection, the transfiguration scene calls Jesus' disciples to witness and obedience.

While this view which sees the transfiguration story as a misplaced resurrection event has its allurements, it probably should remain where it is in the gospel chronology as a story to ratify Jesus' prediction of his foreseen suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection, and as a confirmation and understanding of Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ. If Mark is "Peter's interpreter" as mentioned by Papias,⁴¹ and some of Mark's materials where Peter is evident compose a

narrative framework for much of the gospel, it is difficult to see *why* and *how* Mark would have allowed a resurrection story to be placed within the earthly ministry of Jesus. The resurrection stories, the baptismal story, and the transfiguration event are "epiphany stories" about a saviour through whom God is manifested. The baptismal story (Mark 1:9-11) shows us that Jesus *starts* his ministry as God's beloved Son, when the heavenly voice indicates who he is. The transfiguration story *re-confirms* what the baptismal story has told, that Jesus is one through whom God's divinity continues to shine. The resurrection stories further reveal Jesus after his crucifixion as one whose Spirit *remains* with his disciples. Frederick C. Grant's words give us sound judgment as we try to evaluate the transfiguration story as an antedated resurrection event: "The theory is possible, but not very probable. . . . Whatever its origin, the incident has in its present form the theological implications which a later writer drew (I Pet. 1:16-21). It was a preview of the 'majesty' of Christ, a foregleam of his 'power and coming'; it was preliminary to and pointing forward to the coming of Christ in 'glory' at the Parousia (not only at the Resurrection)." ⁴²

THE RESURRECTION AS A MIRACLE

Living in a scientific age modern man feels the dependency of the laws of nature, knowing that they are trustworthy. Just as the Father "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends his rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt. 5:45), so man knows that all other laws of nature are constant, and are not set aside by the whims of man. The law of gravitation affects both the sinner and the saint; neither can break it! Yet in the present world the viewpoint of David Hume in the eighteenth century, "Miracles do not happen," is *passé*, for the universe is an organism, where the unpredictable can take place, and not a machine, where each cause has always the same determined effect. In viewing the resurrection as a miracle, "the resurrection of Christ does not violate nature but only death."⁴³ The unusual (such as the resurrection of Jesus) does happen, and when it occurs it is not *contrary* to the laws of nature, but *above* the known laws of nature; that is, not understood, since man does not know all that there is to be known about the laws of this mysterious universe.

Miracles play an important role in the New Testament. "No one would have told such stories about Jesus if he had not actually held the role of miracle-worker."⁴⁴ The Gospel of Mark, with its 661 verses, has 209 verses concerned with miracle stories, more

than 31 per cent of the gospel. The miracle stories, however, in the Synoptic Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke are never told to prove Jesus' divinity, but are given as signs (*semeion*) to show the power (*dunamis*) of God working in history. In the Gospel of John the seven miracle stories (2:1-11; 4:40-54; 5:2-9; 6:16-21; 6:25-65; 9:1-41; 11:1-53) are "signs," told in order that men might believe, and in believing have eternal life. The miracles in the Synoptic Gospels are seen as signs of the coming kingdom, as evidenced in Jesus' words: "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20; Matt. 12:28). In Jesus' earthly ministry his miracles are encompassed in his bringing spiritual, mental, and physical health to those who come to him. After his death and resurrection *the resurrection becomes the miracle of all miracles*. "The interpretation of the miracle of the Resurrection only brings to a climax the interpretation of all the miracles of the gospel, and its significance is entirely eschatological. It is not evidence of the possibility of 'human survival of bodily death,' or proof of the 'immortality of the human soul,' or even, at first, evidence that Jesus was divine (cf. Acts 2:24). Rather it is evidence that the whole mission and ministry in the inauguration of God's kingdom is far from ending in frustration and defeat—going on victoriously and

successfully, and now with added supernatural power," writes Frederick C. Grant.⁴⁵

Scientific knowledge is able to explain the happenings in the "known" world, where an effect can always be anticipated by a cause. Miracles, however, where the unusual and the unpredictable occur, lie in the realm of faith-knowledge, and hence in the area of the "numinous," where actual results can never be ascertained with certainty. Events within the area of both sense knowledge and faith-knowledge lie within the same universe, in which God is the Creator. Hence, miraculous events no more than scientifically predicted events violate the laws of the universe, of which God is the Author. Miracles are merely dramatic illustrations of the ways that God's laws sometimes act in the lives of persons. Just as men occasionally act in ways much greater than their friends ever predicted they would act, so God also acts in ways beyond the predicted and the ordinary. The whole universe is "in his hands," including the usual and the unusual happenings. To the positivists it may seem that miracles must be explained as "irrational," since the positivists are concerned with knowledge as part of the causal chain of cause and effect. However, "He who thinks that it is possible to speak of miracles as of demonstrable events capable of proof offends against the thought of God as acting in hidden ways."⁴⁶ Hence to the Christian theist, who sees in

God's grace the way God sometimes acts through the unusual, miracles are not irrational; they merely seem irrational to the person whose "eye of faith" cannot see beyond the causal chain of acts. As Edwyn R. Bevan has indicated, the universe is more complex and wonderful for those whose viewpoint allows them to believe in the resurrection of Jesus than for those who feel that predicted knowledge is all there is to the whole.⁴⁷

According to H. H. Farmer, "a miracle is an event or situation which is so designed by God as to be recognized as a special revelation of His personal activity in the world, and which contributes in some recognizable way to the fulfillment of His purpose for mankind."⁴⁸ Would not the resurrection of Jesus lie within this category?

Christianity *starts* with a postulate of faith in which the incarnation is discerned as a "miracle" with the unique and the unusual entering history in the word becoming flesh. The miracle is *extended* in the early Church as men surrender to God and take seriously the proclamation of Paul, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (II Cor. 5:19). The resurrection is not only the *extension* of Christ's incarnation into the lives of those who believe on him but an event which is never separated from the crucifixion of Christ. All are interrelated in the atonement of men within the entirety of God's creation. Hence

“miracle has actually moved from the circumference to the very centre of revelation. No longer are the signs of the supernatural thought of as mere credentials, but as a part of the very substance of what is revealed. The Resurrection and the mighty works are seen as an essential part of the drama by which God personally discloses Himself, and by which He achieves victory over evil and the creation of a new humanity.”⁴⁹

While modern man looks upon the problem of law and order in a different way from those who lived in the first century, the miracle stories must be seen in the New Testament as playing an important role in the gospel story as “signs” of God’s power in helping to bring salvation to mankind. After Jesus’ earthly ministry he was envisaged by his faithful followers as “sitting at the right hand of Power” (Mark 14:62), continuing as the resurrected Lord with his mighty works among those who believed on him. As his earthly disciples had cast out demons in his name (Mark 9:38ff.), so the Apostles Peter and Paul after his resurrection continued to perform miraculous acts in the name of their resurrected Lord Jesus (Acts 3:5f.; 4:7f.; 9:34f.; 16:16f.). These deeds done in the name of Jesus the resurrected Lord continued as “signs” of the power of God working in history. Concerning the resurrection of Jesus being the “miracle of all miracles,” John Knox has poignantly designated

the centrality of this wondrous event: "The resurrection was not the final miracle of a series, but the first. It was not accepted because of earlier miracles, but earlier miracles were accepted because of the resurrection. For the resurrection was the moment when not only the spiritual lordship of Jesus began, but when also the whole earthly life was 'transformed' before his disciples." ⁵⁰

While discussion at times, as related to miracle and the resurrection, has centered about the "miracle" of Jesus' physical body being freed from the tomb, the real truth of miracle lies in the fact that mighty acts continued after Jesus' crucifixion through his resurrection, which brought forth the Christian Church, the New Testament, and the religion called Christianity. Without the "miraculous" occurrence of Jesus' resurrection, there would have been no Church, no New Testament, no religion called Christianity. Therein lies "*the great miracle*" with its relation to Jesus' resurrection.

POSTWORD

NO EVENT in the history of mankind upon this planet has left a deeper effect upon religious culture than the resurrection of Jesus: therein lies the *meaning* of Jesus' resurrection. Yet no event has been so difficult to corral within a statement which says, "This is exactly what happened in Jesus' resurrection": therein lies the *mystery* of Jesus' resurrection. Certainly the *mystery* and the *meaning* of Jesus' resurrection are entwined, for they both are intricately a part of the resurrection narratives. The pages of this book have tried to show their correlation with each other, and their interdependence as well, which need to be shown if Jesus' resurrection is to be appreciated by modern man.

There are two ways to prove Christian ideas: one is by rational objective argumentation, where a person tries to "save" or "support" a dogma by lining up logical arguments. The other way to "prove" a Christian concept is by seeing whether it "works" through

speaking to man's experience. In the latter a religious truth "saves" or "supports" a person through bringing him a feeling of atonement (at-one-ment) with God and Jesus Christ. Men through the centuries have used both approaches to "prove" the resurrection of Jesus, but the one which predominates in the New Testament is the second, whereby members of the early Church found through their venture of faith that their resurrected Lord empowered both them and their fellowship (within the Church called the body of Christ). Such a view prevails today in an age which employs the term "existentialism," since Christians today in their *faith*-knowledge continue to find the resurrection of Jesus Christ a "saving event" in their personal and corporate existence.

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36. Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 200f.
37. V. Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
38. R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. I (London: SCM Press, Ltd.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 175.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
40. *New Testament Theology* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955), p. 133.
41. Eusebius, *Church History*, V. 8.3; also see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III. 1.1 regarding Mark's writing down Peter's preaching.
42. Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 225.
43. R. R. Niebuhr, *Resurrection and Historical Reason* (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, Ltd.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), p. 177.
44. Martin Dibelius, *The Message of Jesus Christ* (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, Ltd.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), p. 168.
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47. *Hellenism and Christianity* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1921), p. 228.

48. J. S. Lawton, *Miracles and Revelation* (New York: Association Press, 1960), p. 252.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 254, 255.

50. *Jesus: Lord and Christ* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1958), pp. 253, 254.